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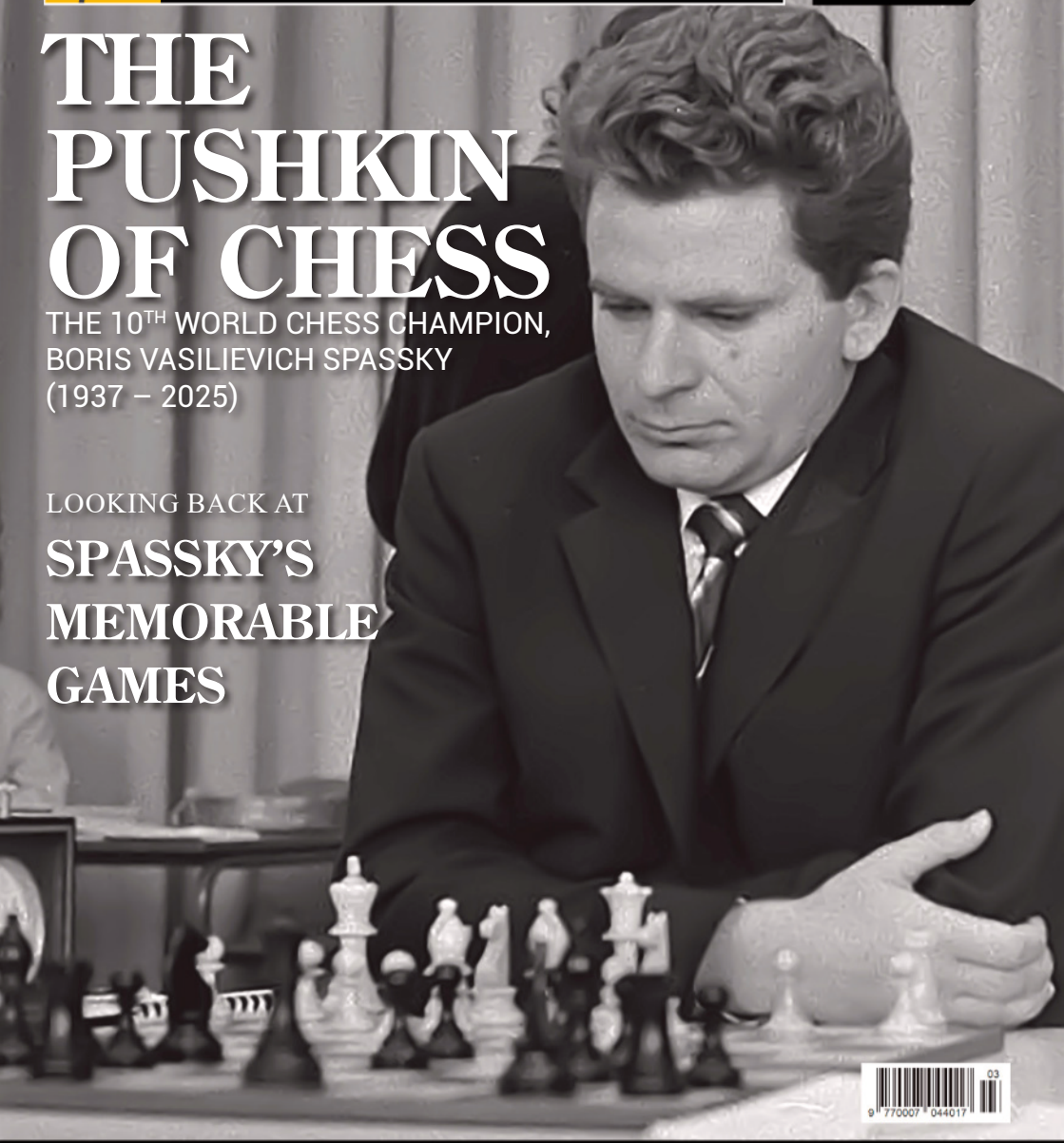
THE PUSHKIN OF CHESS

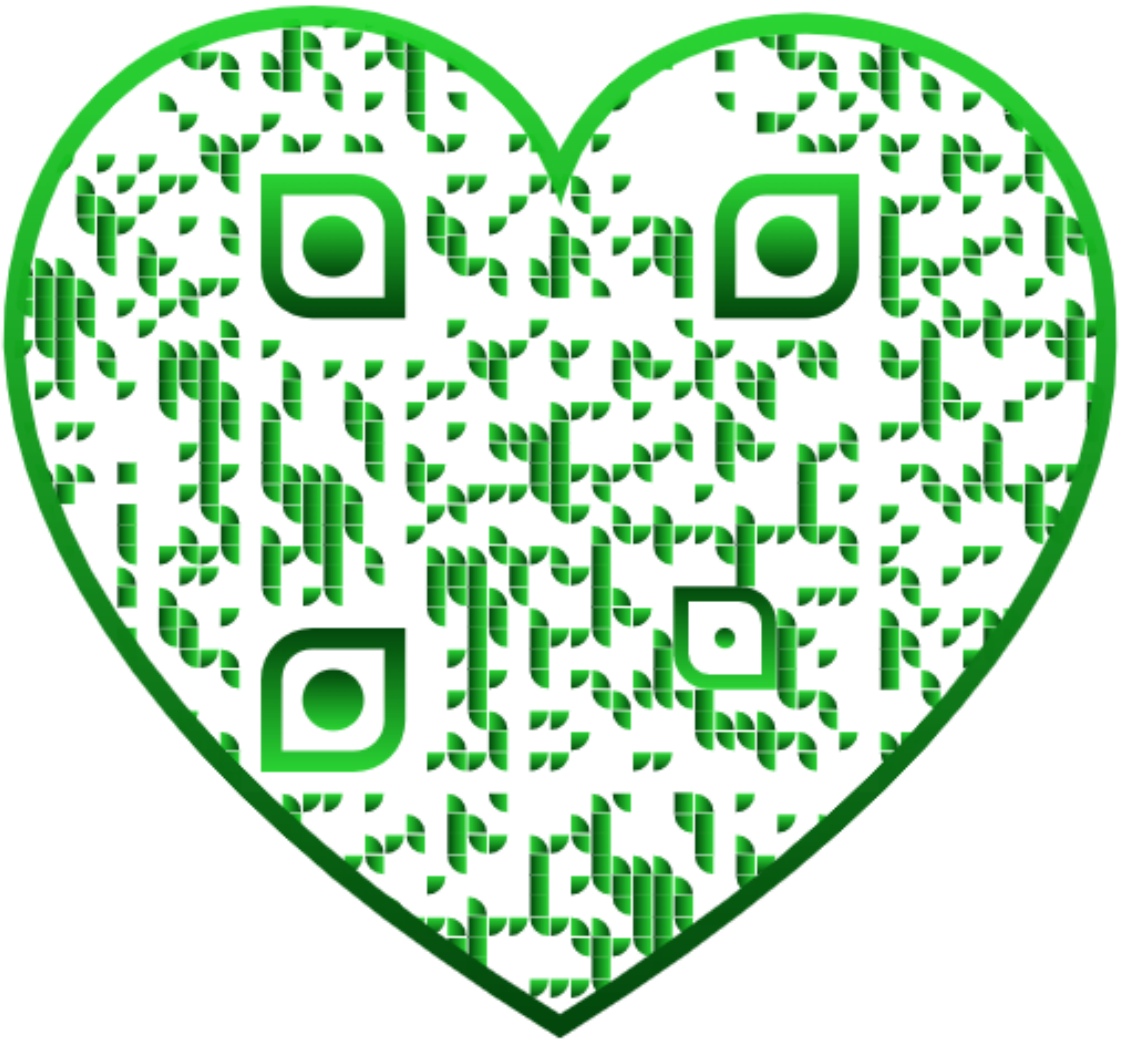
THE 10TH WORLD CHESS CHAMPION, BORIS VASILIEVICH SPASSKY (1937 – 2025)

LOOKING BACK AT

SPASSKY'S MEMORABLE GAMES



EDITORIAL: DOES BEING GOOD AT CHESS MEAN YOU ARE SMART?



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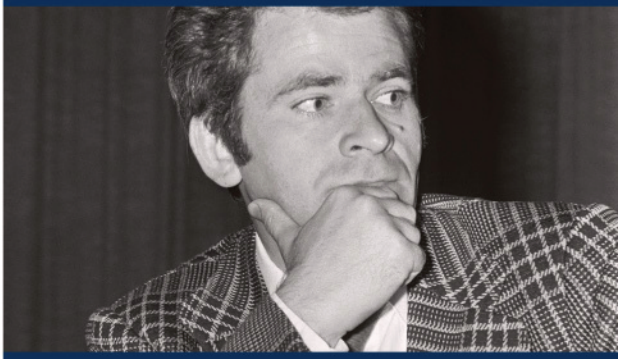

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Does being good at chess mean you are smart?

Chess is often associated with high intelligence. Many non-chess players assume that those who play must be exceptionally intelligent. A YouGov survey in the U.S. in June last year found that 50% of Americans think that chess players are more intelligent than the average person. A third (36%) think there is no difference between the two in intelligence.

There have been studies which have examined the correlation between chess skills and broader life success. A 2016 analysis published in the Journal of Educational Research found that playing chess had modest but statistically significant effects on student performance, particularly in mathematics and reading. Research published in Frontiers in Psychology (2017) confirmed that chess training improved children's working memory, concentration, and fluid intelligence, particularly among younger participants.

But - does this all translate into life success?

The results here are more anecdotal. A Google search of the studies in the area did not come up with any concrete results. I asked some friends in the chess community, and they couldn't find anything concrete, pointing me to some general articles and opinion pieces. One reason for this lack of concrete evidence could be the inherent difficulty in isolating chess skills from broader cognitive traits or social factors.

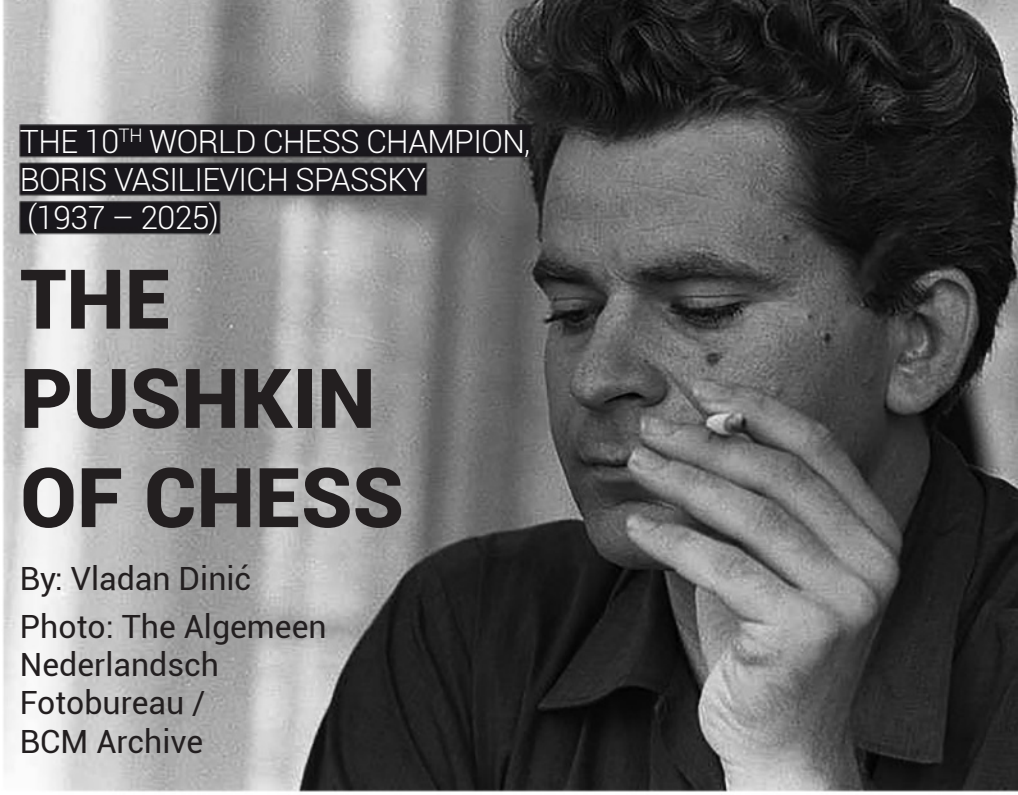
A more logical argument may be the reverse: People aren't smart because they play chess; rather, smart people tend to excel at chess. A 1992 study of 33 gifted Belgian chess players found that "a high level of general intelligence and of spatial ability are necessary to achieve a high standard of play in chess."

Perhaps the strongest support for this argument comes from the finance industry, where many strong chess players have thrived—just look at the New York corporate league. As an example, take the hedge fund manager Boaz Weinstein - who is an International Master and currently at war with the City of London because of his activist assault on the UK investment trust industry. In a 2024 conference on chess and business, he explained how chess skills helped him catch the "London whale", costing JP Morgan six billion dollars.

There's a hidden danger in the stereotype that links chess to intelligence: associating chess with intelligence can discourage people who may feel that, because they are not good at chess, they are not intelligent/smart enough and, naturally, they want to avoid that. However, cognitive skills do not automatically translate to real-life success. What most people who are not following chess closely often fail to notice is that - when you look at the chess professionals, all those below a strong Grandmaster level (2600+) often struggle to make ends meet if they live solely off playing chess.

Chess skill may be a sign of intelligence, but it does not guarantee success beyond the board. As one Grandmaster told me: among top players, you can easily tell who's smart and who's really smart—the really smart ones usually find success beyond the chessboard.

Milan Dinic, Editor



THE 10TH WORLD CHESS CHAMPION, BORIS VASILIEVICH SPASSKY (1937 – 2025)

THE PUSHKIN OF CHESS

By: Vladan Dinić

Photo: The Algemeen Nederlandsch Fotobureau / BCM Archive

Every man on Earth "lasts" as long as his memory lasts. Not a second more. Boris Vasilievich Spassky, the tenth world chess champion, passed away on February 27, 2025, at the age of 88. But Spassky's legacy will endure.

Spassky was not only a chess genius but also a gracious and charismatic figure who left a lasting impression on those who knew him. As the news of Spassky's death broke, Arkady Dvorkovich, the president of the International Chess Federation, released a statement: "He was not only one of the greatest players of the Soviet era and the world, but also a true gentleman. His contributions to chess will never be forgotten."

Spassky's career became overshadowed by the "Match of the Century", against Bobby Fischer in 1972. The event was not just a defining moment in chess but also a powerful symbol of Cold War rivalry.

WHY SPASSKY REFUSED TO ABANDON THE 1972 MATCH

Since chess was very popular in the former Yugoslavia, I was among the Yugoslav journalists sent to report from Reykjavik in 1972. A remote, icy outpost became the centre of a geopolitical showdown. And you could feel it in the air. Unlike other chess tournaments, this one drew more than just players and fans. Among the spectators were shadowy figures in long coats—men who played a different kind of chess, with human lives as their pawns. In that sea of tension, Spassky was the lighthouse - calm, polite, well-dressed, punctual.

The match in Reykjavik in 1972 turned out to be one of the most important moments in chess history. However, it did not have to be that way: Spassky had every reason to walk away from the 1972 match. Sergei

Pavlov, a high-ranking Soviet sports official, urged him to leave. 'Boris, leave! Why are you doing this? You will remain world champion!' Spassky refused. The rest is history.

The gentleman and poet of chess, Boris Spassky, was a different type of chess player from Fischer. A chess prodigy, Spassky learnt the game at age five while living in an orphanage during the Siege of Leningrad. But unlike Fischer, his approach to chess was artistic rather than combative. He was known for his elegance and charm, for which he was called the "Pushkin of Chess". When he lost the title to Fischer in 1972, Spassky demonstrated his greatness not only as a chess player, but also as a person.

While preparing this article, I came across an interview that Spassky gave me for the Yugoslav leading daily "Večernje Novosti" in 1982, as well as some notes in the archives.

When asked why he did not abandon the match and keep the crown, Spassky said: "Listen, Dinic, try to understand me... I also thought about leaving, but... And what about the money? With a big prize. Nobody would pay anything. The event would fail."

Here it's worth noting that the match in Reykjavik was the first match for a chess title with a high fee. Now, as I write this article, I remember what the great Mikhail Moiseyevich Botvinnik told me in an interview for "Večernje Novosti", in the premises of the Chess "Informator" in Belgrade: "Now are different chess times. When Smyslov and I played matches for the title and the chess crown, the winner got a "Lajka" camera, and the loser got a "Zenit" camera".

The decision to continue playing the match and the loss of the title led to Spassky losing favour with the Soviet authorities. We in Yugoslavia did not know much about the details, but it was obvious in the years after the match that Spassky no longer enjoyed the support and status he had before. By 1978, he emigrated to France with his third wife.

THE "REMATCH OF THE CENTURY" *YUGOSLAVIA, 1992*

Twenty years after Reykjavík - in 1992 - Spassky and Fischer played the famous "Rematch of the Century" in the war-torn Yugoslavia. The match was organized by the somewhat controversial businessman "Gazda Jezda" whose name would later be linked to the disappearance of billions of dollars in foreign currency savings of Yugoslav citizens.

The atmosphere in that match was different from the one in Reykjavik. As Grandmaster Bora Ivkov - who was one of Spassky's seconds for the match - told me - the preparation was nowhere near the one in 1972. When I asked Ivkov how

the preparation was going, his answer was short: “Not at all. I don’t know what he needs me for, we were amateur chess fans.” After all, that match played the role of media folklore and an attempt by a war-torn country under Western sanctions to break the media blockade in the world.

Fischer won again, but by then, the match was about more than just chess. It was a symbolic meeting of two former champions, in a country where a new kind of history was taking place.

SPASSKY'S HUMOUR

Spassky was a Grandmaster in every sense of the word, a man who conquered everyone around him with his presence. But also someone who knew how to joke, even at his own expense.

I remember when Spassky came to my newspaper office in 2004 out of the blue.

- Hello Dinic, can you help me get in touch with Jezdimir?! (Jezdimir Vasiljević, who organized the “Rematch of the Century”.

- What do you need Jezda for - I asked.

- I need to talk to him about some money, Spassky replied.

- I can, but I wouldn’t advise you, I said. Spassky: Why?

Me: Well, he heard from Fischer a while ago and Bobby told him that he gave you some money to deliver to him, and you didn’t!

Dragan Kotevski from the Belgrade Chess Federation, who was also present at the conversation, started laughing...

Boris paused for a moment before grinning. “Forget it—I don’t need to find him after all”!

SPASSKY AND FISCHER – TWO PATHS, ONE LEGACY

As Spassky fell out of favour with his country in 1972 and went into exile, Fischer suffered a similar fate two decades later. By choosing to play in Yugoslavia, which was then under US sanctions (even publicly spitting on a State Department letter explicitly telling him he would be prosecuted if he violated the sanctions and played), Fischer found himself in direct conflict with America. Unlike Spassky, who led a relatively stable life in France, Fischer’s path from 1992 to his location in Japan in 2004 remains a great mystery.

When he was arrested at Tokyo airport in 2004 for violating US sanctions, Fischer spent several months in prison. Then Spassky came forward and showed his greatness and humanity for his old frenemy. He personally wrote to the then US President George W. Bush, where Spassky indicated that he, like Bobby, was guilty of the same crime.

"Bobby and I committed the same crime. Put sanctions against me also. Arrest me. And put me in the same cell with Bobby Fischer. And give us a chess set."

Fischer, upon hearing about Spassky’s letter, humorously replied: "What do I need Spassky for? Better to put that... what’s her name - Kosteniuk in jail with me!"

A few months after Fischer’s death in Reykjavik in January 2008, Spassky came to the grave to pay his respects. "Do you think the spot next to him is available," he joked to reporters afterwards, adding, "We will see what happens."

Although Spassky and Fischer had completely different destinies, both left an indelible mark on the history of chess. Fischer was an uncompromising fighter, whose tenacity and genius changed the way chess is played. Spassky was a chess poet,

Spassky against Larsen, Wijk aan Zee 1967
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his elegant style inspiring generations.. Boris Spassky and Bobby Fischer - two giants, two different paths, but one eternal legacy.

THE FUNERAL OF BORIS SPASSKY

Boris Vasilievich Spassky was buried at the Troyekurovskoye cemetery in Moscow. About 200 people came to say goodbye to the legendary grandmaster, among whom were prominent figures from the world of chess, family and friends. Among those present were Arkady Dvorkovich, President of FIDE, and Andrei Filatov, President of the Russian Chess Federation.

The Russian outlet *Sport Express* published an extensive report from the funeral. The article also explained the cause of death: Despite surviving two strokes, Spassky did not manage to recover from pneumonia in hospital. In the article it is also noted that Spassky's sister, a draughts champion, had recently died in Petrograd (Spassky himself insisted on this name when referring to what the rest would today call St Petersburg). His second wife, grieving the recent loss of their son, was absent from the crowd.

One of the people attending the funeral was Boris Postovsky, an international chess referee who lives in Boston and who knew both Boris and Bobby. Speaking to the Sport Express, Postovsky shared some insightful information with the Russian newspaper about the 1972 match: "I think he [Spassky] underestimated Fischer a little. This, I think, is Botvinnik's fault... They reasoned a little dismissively: ahh, well, who is Fischer? Uneducated! At that time, there were no world champions without higher education, Bobby was the first such person. Until 1972, Spassky beat Fischer constantly. And in stunning style! Another moment - Boris wanted Tal to go with him to the match. And Botvinnik was against it. He said: "He will start drinking there..." It was a mistake. Boris needed just the kind of support that only Tal could provide."

END OF AN ERA

At the Troekurovsky cemetery, Spassky found peace next to those who, like him, left their mark on history. Spassky was not just a chess player - he was a symbol of an era. Boris Spassky, the 'Pushkin of Chess,' has played his final move. But like his greatest games, his legacy will be studied, admired, and never forgotten

LOOKING BACK AT SPASSKY'S MEMORABLE GAMES

By GM Alexandar Colovic; www.alexcolovic.com

Boris Spassky was known as a universal player, one who could play equally well any type of position. He could win games with a direct attack, maneuvering, or from an equal endgame. And he could do this against the best players in the world.

Another important aspect of Spassky's game was his ability to sense and change the character of the game. When asked, he said that at his prime, he was best at sensing the critical point in the game.

The selected games show Spassky attack, bluff, build up an attack, counterattack and execute combinations. They are one of his most famous games, played against World Champions, future World Champions and one of the best players in the world at the time.

One peculiarity noticeable in his games is the cluster of pieces he would create in the centre, as a starting stage for an attack. This is how he beat Fischer twice, as you can see below.

Boris Spassky, the tenth World Chess Champion, often referred to the exclusive group of titleholders as "the smallest trade union in the world," which numbered only 13 members at the time. With his passing on February 27, 2025, at the age of 88, this distinguished circle has lost another member. While Spassky may no longer be with us, his games and contributions to chess will endure, inspiring future generations.

Boris Vasilievich **Spassky** - Robert James **Fischer**

Mar del Plata International-23 Mar del Plata (2), 30.03.1960

1.e4 e5 2.f4 In the first game between these two legends, both players wanted to surprise each other. Fischer didn't want to play his beloved Najdorf Sicilian and opted for 1...e5 (something that he occasionally did until 1963) while Spassky showed "no respect" and essayed the King's Gambit, an opening he was fond of and had great results in. Perhaps Fischer was provoking him into playing it?

2...exf4 3.♘f3 Spassky always preferred this move, unlike his opponent, who liked 3.♗c4 better.

3...g5 The loss in this game motivated Fischer to seek the "refutation" of the King's Gambit and he went on to publish an article with that name. In it, he recommended the move 3...d6, which even today is considered one of the best replies for Black.

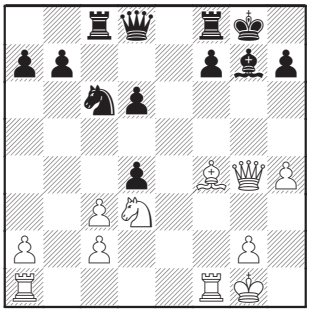
4.h4 g4 5.♘e5 ♘f6 6.d4 The move 6.♗c4 is more popular, but the engine confidently gives Black an advantage in both cases. But who cares about the objective evaluation when one plays the King's Gambit?

6...d6 7.♘d3 ♘xe4 8.♗xf4 ♗g7 9.♘c3 ♘xc3 10.bxc3 c5 Fischer plays forcefully, attacking White's centre.

11.♗e2 cxd4 12.0-0 In true King's Gambit spirit, Spassky sacrifices three pawns to speed up his development.

12...♘c6! 12...dxc3? would be too greedy. After 13.♗xg4 0-0 14.♗xc8 ♕xc8 15.♗xd6 ♖e8 16.♕h5 White has a strong initiative.

13.♗xg4 0-0 14.♗xc8 ♖xc8 15.♕g4



White has some visual initiative for the pawn deficit and it's interesting to observe how both players deal with the situation - Spassky trying to find compensation, Fischer trying to extinguish the initiative.

15...f5! The best move, which frees the f7-square for the rook in case the bishop on g7 needs protection, and the f6-square, for the ...♖f6-g6 transfer.

16.♕g3 dxc3 17.♖ae1 Spassky ignores the material and simply completes his development.

17.♗xd6? ♖f6! with ...♖g6 next would kill off any hopes for White on the kingside.

17...♔h8 Black removes the king from the sensitive g-file.

17...♕f6 18.♗xd6 ♖fe8 is what the engine prefers, when it doesn't think White has a lot to show for the pawn.

18.♔h1 Spassky unhurriedly does the same.

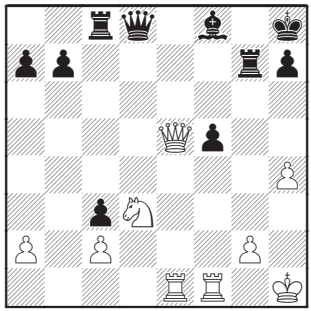
18.♗xd6 ♗d4+ 19.♔h1 ♖g8 20.♕h2! is the engine's line, claiming White has compensation.

18...♖g8 Following the plan started with the last move.

The engine still insists on 18...♕f6 19.♗xd6 ♖fe8 with a more central play.

19.♗xd6 ♗f8 Fischer seeks exchanges.

20.♗e5+ ♘xe5 21.♕xe5+ ♖g7

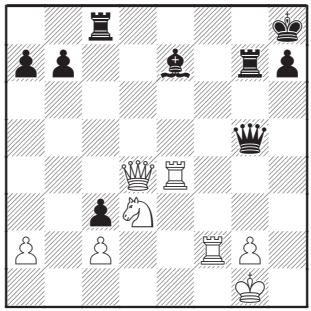


Black wants to have the rook active on the g-file.

21...♗g7 22.♕h2!? intending ♖xf5. 22...♕f6 23.♖e5 with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

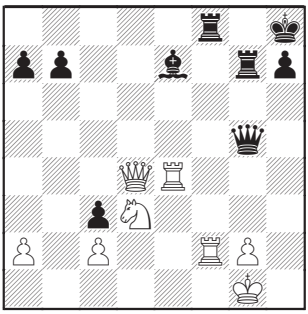
22.♖xf5 ♕xh4+ 23.♔g1 ♕g4 This was Fischer's idea, to pin White down to the defence of the g2-pawn.

24.♖f2 ♗e7 25.♖e4 ♕g5 26.♕d4



It's clear that White isn't worse now as his pieces are wonderfully centralised. Notice the compact cluster of white pieces in the centre, very similar to Spassky's play in the next game against the same opponent. What is also instructive for this game is that Spassky started from an inferior position, without clear compensation, but then without a mistake from his opponent still managed to equalise and obtain good attacking chances.

26...♖f8??



Fischer blunders in a tense situation.

26...♖d8 27.♕xc3 was probably not to Fischer's liking, when White regained the pawn and maintained the central dominance.; 26...b6 was a neutral move that it's hard to make, but White doesn't have anything concrete.

27.♖e5! Suddenly the black queen cannot remain in contact with the bishop on e7 and Black loses material.

27...♖d8 28.♕e4 ♕h4 29.♖f4 Black loses a piece, so he resigned.

1-0

Boris Vasilievich **Spassky** - Robert James **Fischer**

Olympiad–19 Final A Siegen (6), 19.09.1970

This was the most anticipated game of the Olympiad. After a prolonged break Fischer returned to the chess scene with incredible results, so his game with the reigning World Champion was what the whole world was waiting for. It's interesting to note that the Soviet authorities offered Spassky to sit out the game, but he refused.

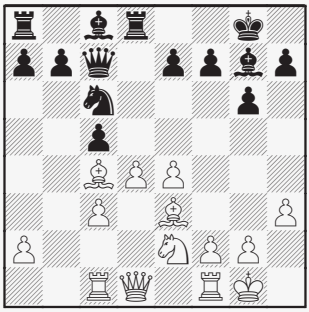
1.d4 After the experiment with the King's Gambit 10 years prior, Spassky always opened with 1.d4 against Fischer, until game 7 of their match in Reykjavik, when he returned to 1.e4.

1...♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 Fischer avoided his usual King's Indian when he played players like Petrosian or Spassky. He also played the Grunfeld in their previous encounter with the same pieces, at the Piatigorsky Cup in Santa Monica in 1966.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 This system was always Spassky's favourite.

7...c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 ♕c7 This move has the idea of ...♖d8. It was Fischer's choice in both games against Spassky.

11.♖c1 ♖d8 12.h3



Spassky deviates from the game in Santa Monica. Notably, today's engines want to push that same pawn, only one square further.

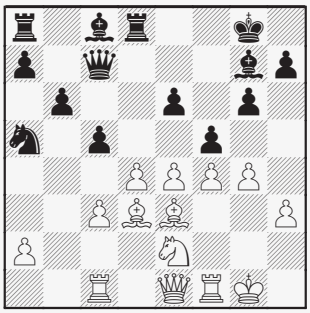
12.♕e1 e6 *(12...♕a5!* was the improvement that practically refuted the move 12.♕e1, introducing the threat of ...cxd4 and the subsequent exchange of queens.*)* 13.f4 ♘a5 led to unclear play where Spassky was triumphant in the end, winning an instructive endgame.

12...b6 13.f4 e6 14.♕e1 Without the idea of ...♕a5, Spassky uses the same move to bring the queen closer to the kingside.

14...♘a5 15.♗d3 Threatening f5.

15...f5! In standard fashion, Fischer stops White's kingside advance.

16.g4!?



A move that shows Spassky's courage and willingness to fight.

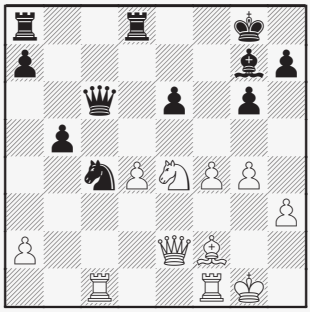
16.♘g3 is less committal and it's the engine's preference. After 16...♗b7 17.♕e2 ♖ac8 is obviously fine for Black, as White's play on the kingside isn't moving at all.

16...fxe4 Even though there is nothing wrong with Fischer's move, a year later, Stein deviated with 16...♗b7 but things got very messy after 17.♘g3 ♕d7 *(17... cxd4 18.cxd4 ♕e7* is likely better.*)* 18.gxf5 cxd4?! *(18...exf5)* 19.fxe6 ♕xe6

20.f5 though eventually the game ended in a draw: ½- ½ (30) Spassky,B-Stein,L Moscow 1971.

17.♗xe4 ♗b7 18.♘g3 ♘c4 19.♗xb7 ♕xb7 20.♗f2 White has a weakened king, but he is compact on the kingside and Black's pieces cannot get to it. Similar to the previous game against Fischer in the King's Gambit, he's centralising his pieces and emphasises the compactness of his position.

20...♕c6 21.♕e2 cxd4 22.cxd4 b5 23.♘e4!



An accurate feel for the dynamics. If White doesn't create something on the kingside, Black is simply much better - a dominating knight on c4, mobile queenside majority and a target on d4.

23...♗xd4 24.♘g5 ♗xf2+ 25.♖xf2 ♖d6 Fischer defends the extra pawn and keeps the rook on the open d-file.

26.♖e1 White prepares ♘e4 and adds one more piece in the central cluster, at the same time attacking the pawn on e6.

After the immediate 26.♘e4 ♖d4 attacks the knight on e4 and after 27.♖e1 ♖f8 the other rook prevents the check from f6.

26...♕b6 Fischer tries to create counterplay by threatening ...♖d2.

26...♖f8 this avoids ♘e4-f6, but gives up the extra pawn. After 27.♘xe6 ♖d2 28.♕e4 ♕xe4 29.♖xe4 ♖e8 the endgame is balanced.

27.♘e4 Spassky plays to keep the tension. The knight is aiming for the f6-square, while at the same time preventing ...♖d2. Notice the compactness of the white pieces.

27.f5!? was another interesting attempt. 27...gxf5 *(27...♖f8!? 28.♘xe6 ♖d2 29.♕f3 ♖e8* leads to a messy position*; 27...♖d2 28.♕xe6+ ♕xe6 29.fxe6 ♖xf2 30.♔xf2 ♖e8* should end in a draw.*)* 28.gxf5 ♖d2 *(28...exf5? 29.♕e7* wins for White.*)* 29.♕xe6+ ♕xe6 30.♖xe6 ♖f8 is an equal endgame.

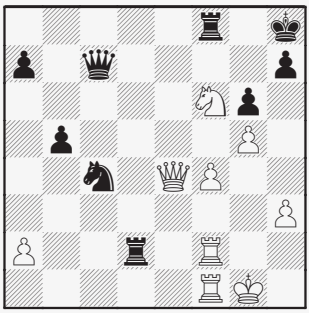
27...♖d4 28.♘f6+ ♔h8 29.♕xe6 ♖d6! The exchange of queens after 29...♕xe6 30.♖xe6 is unpleasant for Black, who has a weak king in view of the excellent knight on f6. 30...♖d6 31.♖fe2 ♖xe6 32.♖xe6 ♔g7 should still be a draw, but Black is the defending side here.

30.♕e4 ♖f8 Removing the attacked rook with tempo, but this allows White to cement the position of the knight on f6.

30...♖ad8 was better, as now after 31.g5 ♖d2 32.♖ef1 the rook on d2 has extra protection and Black can play 32...♕e3! seeking exchange of queens, only this time with much more active pieces than in the comment to Black's 29th move.

31.g5 ♖d2 This was Fischer's idea ever since he played 26...♕b6, but it seems that he overestimated the power of the pin and the attack on the rook on f2.

32.♖ef1 ♕c7??



The decisive mistake. In this game we see a very similar scenario to the previous game - a very tense middlegame where Spassky has the initiative leads to a one-move blunder by Fischer, who seemingly couldn't withstand the tension. The idea of the move is to stop ♕e7, but it cedes control of the d4-square, allowing for deadly threats on the long diagonal.

32...♖xf2 33.♖xf2 ♕e3 was a way to bail out to an endgame. After 34.♕xe3 ♘xe3 35.♖d2 ♔g7 36.♔f2 ♘f5 37.♖d5 White is certainly pressing, but Black should be able to draw;

32...♔g7! is best, according to the engine. Now ♕e7 is met by ...♖f7. 33.♘e8+ ♔g8 34.♘f6+ ♔g7 is a repetition, while 35.f5 ♖xf2 36.♖xf2 ♕e3! is the key move that saves Black after 37.♕h4 h5! 38.fxg6 ♕e1+ 39.♔h2 ♕e5+ with a perpetual. Far from easy to see, it has to be said.

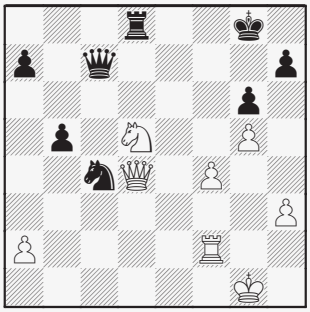
33.♖xd2 The move 33.h4 is even stronger, but humans normally seek more forcing solutions in similar situations.

33...♘xd2 34.♕d4! ♖d8? A second mistake that loses practically on the spot. Fischer avoids a hopeless endgame only to lose in the middlegame.

34...♕b6 was the only move to somehow stay in the game, though after 35.♕xb6 axb6 36.♖d1 ♖d8 37.♖c1 ♘c4 38.♖e1 White penetrates with the rook on the seventh rank and wins the pawn on h7, with a winning position.

35.♘d5+ ♔g8 36.♖f2! Calmly removing the rook from the attacked square and attacking the knight on d2.

36...♘c4



37.♖e2! Now the rook is introduced in the attack along the e-file. Like in the previous game Spassky masterfully uses the rook - it's not for nothing that he's said that the rook was his favourite piece.

37...♖d6 38.♖e8+ ♔f7 39.♖f8+! The final touch.

After 39.♖f8+ ♔xf8 40.♕h8+ ♔f7 41.♘xc7 White wins the queen and the game.

1-0

Garry **Kasparov (2690)** - Boris Vasilievich **Spassky (2605)**

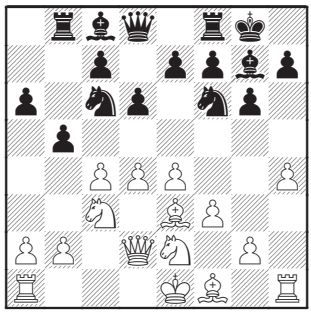
Niksic International Niksic (8), 03.09.1983

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 Spassky rarely played the King's Indian, but this was the second time he used it against Kasparov. In the previous attempt, two years prior to this game, he was successful with it, so this time he repeats the opening.

3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 The Saemisch Variation was one of Kasparov's favourites.

5...♘c6 6.♗e3 a6 7.♘ge2 ♖b8 8.♕d2 0-0 Black finally castles, thus transposing to mainstream theory. It's interesting that in the rematch with Fischer, in 1992, Spassky used the Saemisch against the King's Indian when Fischer chose the Panno Variation with ...♘c6 just like Spassky in this game.

9.h4 b5?!



The sharp reply, but objectively the worse one.

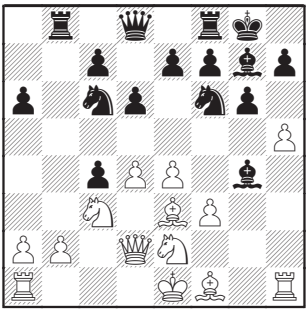
9...h5 is safer, as played by Fischer. 10.♗h6 e5 11.♗xg7 ♔xg7 12.d5 ♘e7 with balanced play in the game: 0-1 (40) Spassky,B (2560)-Fischer,R (2785) Belgrade m/8 1992.

10.h5 bxc4 11.g4?! Natural, but giving Black a chance to muddy the waters.

11.hxg6! fxg6 12.♘f4 is much better. White threatens ♗xc4 and after 12...♘a5 13.0-

0-0 White has a big advantage as Black's pieces are scattered while White has ideas like g4-g5 or e5.

11...♗xg4?!



Spassky tries to change the character of the game by eliminating the pawns on the kingside at the expense of a piece, but this isn't sufficient. He wants to kill off White's attack and this was Spassky's intention against a ferocious attacker like Kasparov.

11...♘b4! is the best move. 12.♘g3 c5 13.♗xc4 d5! and Black is doing quite alright in the complications. In fact, it is White who needs to be careful. 14.♘xd5 ♘fxd5 15.exd5 ♗b7 with excellent play for Black.

12.fxg4 ♘xg4 13.0-0-0 ♘xe3 14.♕xe3 e6 Black has three pawns for the piece, but he's passive, so White should be able to make good use of the extra piece.

15.hxg6 hxg6 16.♖d2 Covering b2 and intending to double on the h-file after the knight moves from e2.

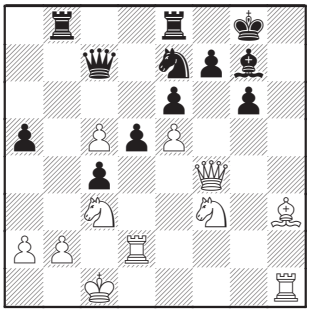
16...♖e8 17.♘g1 d5 18.♘f3 a5 Black cannot do much.

19.e5 ♘e7 20.♗h3 Kasparov prevents a possible ...♘f5.

20.♖dh2! was natural and strong. After 20...♘f5 21.♕f2 c5 22.dxc5 with ideas like ♗h3xf5 or ♖h7 the attack should decide the game.

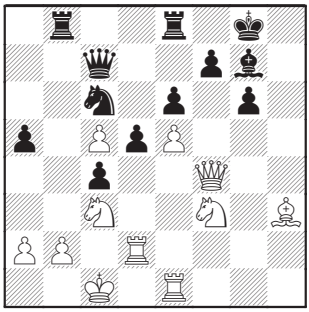
20...c5 The only way for Black to create some counterplay.

21.dxc5 ♕c7 22.♕f4



22.♕g5 was stronger, as after 22...♘c6 White has 23.♗xe6! ♖xe6 *(23...fxe6 24.♕xg6* wins for White*; 23...♘xe5 24.♘xd5* wins as here there is no check on d3 to attack the queen on f4.*)* 24.♘xd5 ♕b7 25.♘f6+ ♔f8 26.♘d7+ ♔e8 27.♘xb8 ♕xb8 28.♖d6 White wins, being an exchange up and with a continuing attack.

22...♘c6 23.♖e1?



23.♗xe6!? was again possible, though now Black has 23...♘xe5! 24.♘xd5 ♘d3+! and now we see the problems with the queen on f4 - it is hanging! 25.♖xd3 ♕xf4+ 26.♘xf4 cxd3 27.♗d5 ♗xb2+ 28.♔d2 and Black has good saving chances;

23.♘g5! ♘xe5 24.♕h4 led to a winning attack, but the lines aren't simple, for

example 24...f5 25.♘xd5! exd5 26.♗g2!

23...d4! Spassky takes his chance! This move equalises the chances objectively, but subjectively Black takes over.

24.♖xd4 Kasparov still plays for a win, but this enterprising move endangers his position.

24.♘xd4 ♘xe5 25.♔d1 this is not an easy move to make. *(25.♔b1 ♕xc5 26.♘xe6!* was a way to keep the balance. After *26...fxe6 27.♕g3* White has compensation for the two-pawn deficit in view of the weakened black king.*)* 25...♕xc5 26.♘e4 ♕e7 27.♘g5 keeps the position very messy;

24.♘e4 was the best, though after 24...♘b4 25.♘fg5 c3 26.bxc3 dxc3 27.♘xc3 f5!! the position remains extremely complicated.

24...♘xd4 25.♘xd4 ♕xc5 26.♘f3? In a very tactical and calculational battle, it is Kasparov who makes a mistake. He still hopes for an attack after ♘g5, but Black can defend.

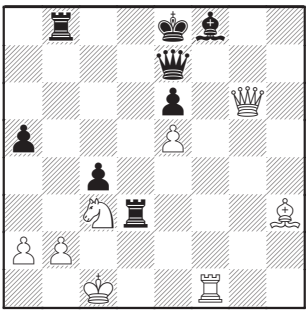
26.a4!? was one of the moves that kept the balance. White secures the b5-square for the knights.; 26.♗g4 was another possibility. 26...♖bd8 27.♘db5 ♖e7 with unclear play.

26...♖ed8?! Spassky misses the chance.

26...♕b6! was more precise. After 27.♖e2 ♖ed8 28.♘g5 ♖b7 Black threatens ...♗h6 and ...♖d3.

27.♘g5 ♕e7 28.♕h4 ♖d3 29.♕h7+ ♔f8 30.♘xe6+!? An interesting try, though White could also play 30.♘ce4.

30...fxe6 31.♖f1+ ♔e8 32.♕g8+ ♗f8 33.♕xg6+?



Kasparov was in time-trouble and this move allows the king to slip away

33.♘d5! was a difficult move, but it was the only one not to lose. After 33...exd5 34.♖xf8+! ♕xf8 35.♕e6+ ♕e7 36.♕g8+ White gives a perpetual check.

33...♔d8 White lost on time, but his position is lost now.

After 33...♔d8 34.♗xe6 ♕b4 Black starts the decisive counterattack.

0-1

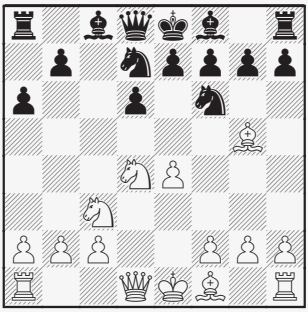
Boris Vasilievich **Spassky** - Tigran V **Petrosian**

World-ch26 Spassky-Petrosian +6–4=13
Moscow (19), 04.06.1969

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 Petrosian was trailing by a point at this stage and he chooses the sharp Najdorf Variation in an attempt to win with the black pieces. In retrospect, a dubious strategy.

6.♗g5 The sharpest move against the Najdorf. It was Spassky's favourite weapon that he also used in his match against Fischer.

6...♘bd7



Petrosian sticks to his pet move, one that he played in the 50s. Modern times saw the return of popularity of this move, which for a very long time, not the least because of this game, was considered insufficient.

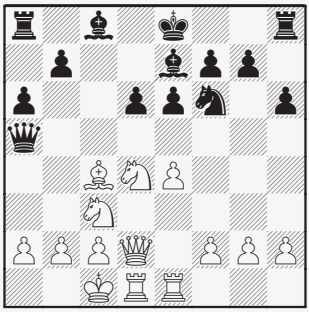
7.♗c4 This was considered best in those days. Today, White also uses this move, but not as exclusively as then.

7...♕a5 The move 7...♕b6 is considered as most topical today.

8.♕d2 h6 Spassky had prior experience in this line. After 8...e6 9.0-0-0 b5 10.♗b3 ♗b7 11.♖he1 ♗e7 1-0 (41) Spassky,B-Polugaevsky,L Riga 1958, a strong blow is the typical Sicilian sacrifice 12.♘f5! exf5 13.exf5 ♘e5 14.f4 0-0-0 15.fxe5 dxe5 16.♕e2 with an advantage to White.

9.♗xf6 ♘xf6 10.0-0-0 e6 11.♖he1 All these moves are played in modern practice, too, but Petrosian's next move is already a serious mistake.

11...♗e7?



Petrosian wants to castle short, but then White gets an automatic attack while Black lacks counterplay on the queenside.

11...♗d7! with the idea to evacuate the king to the queenside, is the recommended way. Black won't be blown off the board then, even though White keeps some initiative.

12.f4 0-0 13.♗b3 ♖e8 The Sicilian requires a fine feeling to strike a balance between counterattack and defence. Petrosian wants to strengthen his kingside with ...♗f8, but the problem is the pawn o h6 - after g5 it will allow White to open the files on the kingside.

13...b5? 14.♘c6 just loses the pawn on d6 after ♘xe7 and ♕xd6.; 13...e5 is an attempt to play in the centre as way of distraction, though after 14.♘f5 ♗xf5 15.exf5 White has a clear advantage thanks to the control of the light square in the centre.; 13...♗d7 14.♔b1 b5? 15.♘d5! is a typical Sicilian tactic when Black has a queen on a5. 15...♕d8

16.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17.g4 and the attack develops by itself.

14.♔b1 ♗f8 15.g4 White's play is natural, especially for an attacking player of Spassky's calibre.

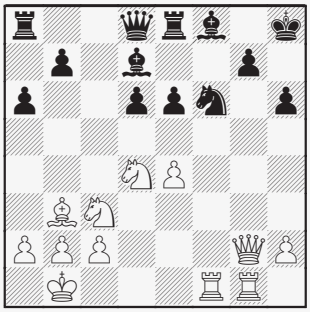
15...♘xg4 At least to have a pawn for the suffering, but the alternatives weren't better.

15...e5 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.♘f5 and g5 is still coming.

16.♕g2 ♘f6 17.♖g1 What's notable is that Black won't even have the time to play the typical ...b5 move on the queenside.

17...♗d7 18.f5 ♔h8 19.♖df1 Spassky simply piles up the pieces on the kingside.

19...♕d8 20.fxe6 fxe6



21.e5! A clearing sacrifice.

21...dxe5 22.♘e4! ♘h5 22...♘xe4 23.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 24.♕xg7# is White's idea.

23.♕g6 exd4 24.♘g5 Black is either mated, or will lose a lot of material. An opening fiasco for Petrosian, but Spassky's smooth attack is worth admiring. This game gave Spassky a two-point advantage and ultimately the win in the match and the World Championship title.

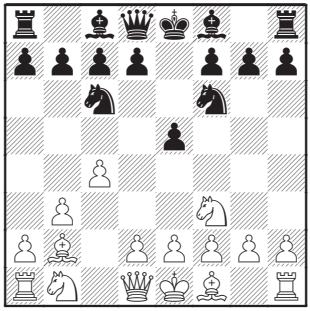
1-0

Bent **Larsen (2650)** - Boris Vasilievich **Spassky (2670)**

Match/Team URS-World 20,5–19,5 Belgrade (2.1), 29.03.1970

This game is Spassky's most famous miniature.

1.b3 e5 2.♗b2 ♘c6 3.c4 ♘f6 4.♘f3



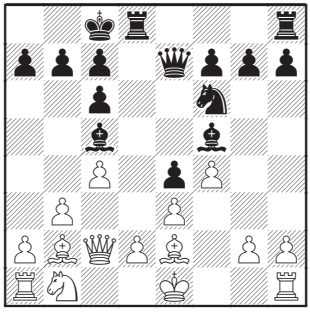
Provocative play by Larsen. 4.e3 is more prudent.

4...e4 5.♘d4 ♗c5 6.♘xc6?! This gives Black simple play in the centre.

6.♘f5 0-0 7.e3 was better, after 7...d5 8.cxd5 ♘b4 9.♘g3 ♘fxd5 the game is pretty sharp.

6...dxc6 Black obtains easy development now with ...♗f5, ...♕e7 and ...0-0-0.

7.e3 ♗f5 8.♕c2 ♕e7 9.♗e2 0-0-0 10.f4?



Larsen neglects development and weakens his kingside.

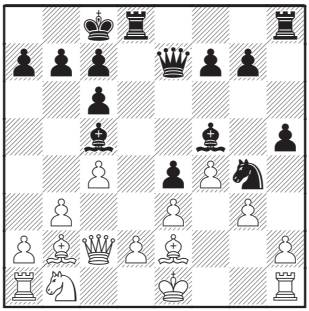
10.a3 ♗d6 11.b4 ♔b8 12.♘c3 ♗e5 is better for Black, but White is solid.

10...♘g4! Immediately targeting the weakened kingside. From this moment until the end of the game, Spassky won't give his opponent a single moment of respite.

11.g3 White stops ...♕h4.

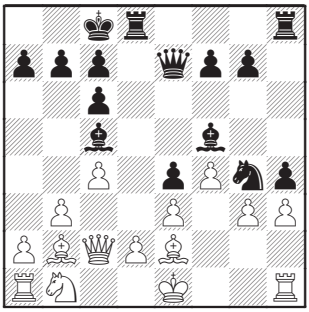
11.h3? ♕h4+ is devastating.

11...h5!



11...♖d3!? was another flashy idea, equally strong. the idea is to take ...♘xe3, while after 12.♗xd3 exd3 13.♕c3 ♕e4 White can resign as the light squares are just too weak.

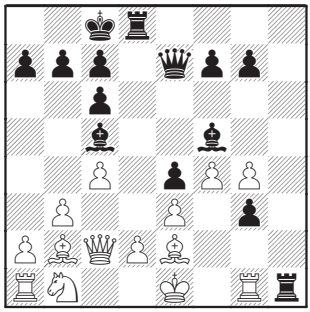
12.h3 h4!



A combination based on the strength of the passed pawn.

13.hxg4 hxg3 14.♖g1 14.♖xh8 ♖xh8 15.♗f3 ♕h4 and White's hopeless queenside cannot help the lone kingside.

14...♖h1!!



One of the most famous moves in chess history.

15.♖xh1 g2 The rook cannot defend against both the check from h4 and the promotion of the g2-pawn.

16.♖f1 16.♖g1 ♕h4+ 17.♔d1 ♕h2 18.♖e1 g1♕ would soon lead to mate.

16...♕h4+ 17.♔d1 gxf1♕+ White gets mated, so he resigned.

17...gxf1♕+ 18.♗xf1 ♗xg4+ 19.♔c1 ♕e1+ 20.♕d1 ♕xd1#

0-1

BBC'S NEW CHESS SERIES OPENS TO MIXED REVIEWS

Chess has returned to British television screens after an absence of over four decades, with BBC Two's latest offering, "Chess Masters: The Endgame."

Premiering on Monday, 10 March, this new eight-part series follows twelve amateur players drawn from the UK's chess scene as they compete for the title of Chess Champion. The programme aims not only to entertain but also to delve into the intricate psychology and universal appeal behind the ancient game.

Hosted by Sue Perkins, renowned for her quick wit and engaging television presence, the show positions chess as both cerebral and accessible. "It's been over 30 years since chess was on our TV screens," said Perkins. "A lot has changed in that time. It's gone from being a beloved board game to an online phenomenon. It's also become sexy—thank you, 'The Queen's Gambit.' "

For Perkins, chess's enduring charm lies in its balance between intellectual rigour and mindfulness. "I love that you can get lost in it," she explained.

"What I love about this series is how much we get to see of the psychology and gamesmanship behind the moves. It's as much about human nature as it is about the placing of pieces across a checkered board," Perkins said.

Providing expert insights throughout the series is David Howell, a Grandmaster and three-time British champion. Howell sees the show as an opportunity to dismantle outdated stereotypes about chess. "Chess has been my life, and I can't wait to share this world with the British public," Howell remarked.

He emphasises chess's role as the "ultimate mind sport," highlighting its universal themes of strategic conflict and truth-seeking. Howell also views the timing of the series as ideal, coinciding with a global chess boom fuelled by digital platforms and recent cultural phenomena.

Complementing Howell's analysis is chess coach Anthony Mathurin, a familiar face from the reality show "Traitors." Together, Howell and Mathurin guide viewers through the nuances and strategic intricacies presented by the contestants.

Unlike its predecessor "The Master Game," which ended abruptly in 1983 due to industrial action, this new iteration is designed explicitly for contemporary audiences. Contestants have been selected not only for their chess abilities but also for their compelling personal backgrounds and communication skills. Notably, half the competitors are women, which is usually not the case in chess tournaments.

The programme's diversity-focused selection process has raised eyebrows among observers due to the presence of at least one notably stronger player, as noted by Leonard Barden in The Guardian.

Despite this, the series aims to showcase the game's broad appeal, blending high-stakes competition with a deeper exploration of human psychology and strategy.

However, early reviews haven't been particularly kind to the show. The Guardian described it as "so dull it's almost unwatchable," awarding it only two stars. While The Telegraph called the show "darn exciting," The Times suggested it was "probably ideal for the slot vacated by Only Connect." Reviewers also took issue with the contestants' "comically dramatic nicknames" (such as the Swashbuckler, Killer Queen, the Unruly Knight, and the Smiling Assassin). Chess enthusiasts, in particular, might find the reality-TV treatment of their beloved game isn't quite their cup of tea.

"Chess Masters: The Endgame," now available on BBC iPlayer, offers viewers a fresh look at the game's timeless appeal and modern resurgence.

BCM Staff

DJERBA MASTERS 2025

THEY DON'T MAKE THEM LIKE THIS ANYMORE

CHESS BEYOND THE SUPER-TOURNAMENTS: WHY THE GAME NEEDS MORE EVENTS LIKE THIS ONE

By GM Aleksandar Colovic; www.alexcolovic.com

Photo: Djerba Official

In an era where elite super-tournaments dominate the chess calendar and open events leave little room for structured progression, the Djerba Masters 2025 stood out as a rare gem—a closed, Category 15 event that blended rising stars with seasoned grandmasters.

In the 90s, Category 15 tournaments were quite popular. Not everybody could afford or wanted to have a Linares where only the top 10 players played. These tournaments gave ample opportunities to players from the lower tier to play closed events, leading to an improvement of their level of play.

Let's take the tournament in Madrid in 1994.

Judit Polgar, aged 18 and rated 2630 at the time, won convincingly with 7/9, a point and a half ahead of players like Ivan Sokolov (2650), who came second, Gata Kamsky (2695), Alexey Shirov (2715), Valery Salov (2685), Evgeny Bareev (2685), Sergey Tiviakov (2630), with the local players represented by Miguel Illescas Cordoba (2590), Jordi Magem Badals (2505) and Pablo San Segundo (2490).

Polgar's success was her first major tournament victory ahead of established elite players, after which her career firmly took off.

Nowadays, however, chess events have gone to the extremes. It is either elite events, where the organisers seek to gather as many players from the top 10 as possible, or open events, with all the unpredictability of the Swiss system.

This division makes the players of the second and third tiers starved for closed events. They are not invited to Norway Chess, so their only choice to try to break through is by playing open events, which is far from perfect.

Nevertheless, there are some exceptions to the extremes. The tournaments in Wijk aan Zee and Prague have proved that a tournament's category is no guarantee of excitement. In fact, the opposite is true - bringing in young, ambitious players is what makes an event successful, attracting public interest and sparking discussion.

The organisers of the Djerba Masters (15-23 February) followed that formula. Inviting a legend like Vasyl Ivanchuk, established players like David Navara and Etienne Bacrot with young guns like Daniel Dardha, Marc'Andria Maurizzi, Volodar Murzin, Parham Maghsoodloo and the Argentinian phenomenon 11-year-

THE VICTOR
MARC'ANDRIA MAURIZZI

old Faustino Oro, proved to be a certain recipe for a wonderful tournament.

It is not for nothing that I took the Madrid tournament for comparison.

Just like in Madrid, the Djerba Masters was won in dominant fashion by a young and rising player. The World Junior Champion of 2023, the Corsican-born Marc'Andria Maurizzi (aged 17) dominated the event with a crushing 7.5/9 (half a point more than Polgar!) and an almost 2900 rating performance, a full point and a half ahead of another promising youngster, Daniel Dardha (aged 19) of Belgium.

It's notable that only these two players won rating points, with the rest losing, except for Murzin, who performed at his level.

The beginning of the tournament means a lot for every player and often the start will determine the player's fate. In the first round Maurizzi played the "Messi of Chess" Oro.

Marc'Andria **Maurizzi** - Faustino **Oro**

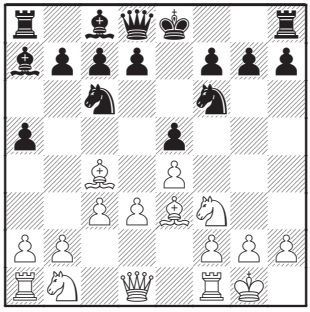
Djerba Masters 2025 Djerba TUN (1.3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 The prodigy from Argentina has a classical repertoire, which bodes well for his future.

3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a5 There are many move-orders in the Giuoco Pianissimo for both sides. With his last move Black prevents a popular plan for White, the queenside expansion with b4, a4-a5 etc.

6.0-0 ♗a7 In game 11 of his World Championship match against Nepomniachtchi, Carlsen also used this retreat, but he first played ...d6.

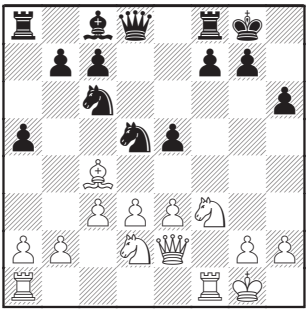
7.♗e3



This is already very rare, the main moves being 7.♗g5, 7.h3, 7.♖e1 and 7.♘bd2.

7...♗xe3 8.fxe3 0-0 9.♘bd2 d5! Black plays the opening well, taking advantage of the fact that he didn't play ...d6, so he executes the central thrust in one go.

10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♕e2 h6



Generally a useful move, but rather vague at this stage. White has a pawn mass in the centre, so Black needs to be more circumspect when it comes to play in the centre.

When it comes to centre play, one idea for Black is to be more forceful with 11...♘b6 12.♗b3 a4 13.♗c2 f5 grabbing space in the centre. Now 14.d4?! can be met by 14...e4 15.♘e1 ♘d5 with excellent play.

12.a4! A good move, fixing the queenside and ensuring the bishop can remain on the a2-g8 diagonal.

12...♘b6 13.♗b3 ♕e7 Black prepares ...♗e6 to neutralise the strong bishop on b3.

14.e4 White can advance either with the e-pawn or the d-pawn. Since he anticipates the exchange of the light-squared bishops, White places his pawns on light squares, increasing his control over them.

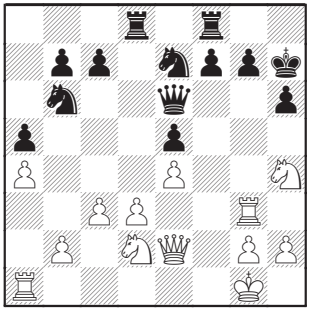
14...♗e6 15.♗xe6 ♕xe6 There was something to be said for 15...fxe6!? because while it looks ugly, it does have the benefit of controlling the d5 and f5-squares. 16.♕e3 ♖ad8 with the idea to put pressure on the d3-pawn.

16.♘h4 White will try to use the semi-open f-file and the access to the f5-square to create chances on the kingside, while Black will try to use the d-file to pin White down to the defence of the weak pawn on d3.

16...♘e7 Oro gives the knight on c6 a better role - it was useless on c6, while from e7 it controls the f5-square and moves closer to the kingside.

17.♖f3 ♖ad8 18.♖g3 The rook is useful on g3 - it defends the pawn on d3 and will be used as an attacking force on the kingside.

18...♔h7



18...f6 is a typical move for these structures, which can also arise from the very popular Anti-Berlin lines after 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.♗xc6 dxc6. 19.♕h5 ♔h8 Black's position is resilient, even though White's presence on the kingside looks threatening. 20.♖f1!? a sharp attempt, sacrificing the pawn on a4. 20...♘xa4 21.♘c4 the idea is to get the knight to e3, from where it can come to f5. 21...♘c5 22.♘e3 ♕f7 and Black should defend after 23.♘g6+ ♘xg6 24.♖xg6 threatening ♘g4 or ♘f5. 24...♔h7 25.♖fxf6! ♕xf6 26.♖xf6 ♖xf6 with a dynamically balanced position.

19.♔h1 An indication that White couldn't find a more direct or forcing way on the kingside.

19.♕h5 g6 was Black's idea, immediately chasing the queen away.

19...g6 Black doesn't want to allow a knight on f5 under any circumstances.

19...f6 was an alternative, with the instructive idea of 20.♘f1 *(20.♖f3* is better, though after *20...♘d7* with the idea of

The young Argentinian talent: Faustino Oro

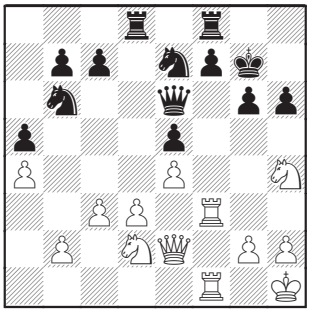
...♘c5 Black is doing fine.*)* 20...g5! 21.♘f3 ♘g6 when it is Black who takes over the initiative on the kingside.

20.♖f3 White leaves the knight on h4 without any squares, hoping for potential sacrifices ong6 or f5.

20.♘hf3 was likely better. White changes the direction of his play - with the black kingside defended and the knight with no squares, it makes sense to switch to central play with d4. 20...♔g7 21.d4 with pressure in the centre.

20...♔g7 21.♖af1 White still banks on an attack and sacrifices the a-pawn.

21.♕f2 f6 22.d4 was an alternative plan, playing in the centre.



21...♘xa4?! Oro is brave, but here it was better to exhibit caution.

21...f6! was necessary, stabilising the kingside. 22.b3 ♘bc8 with ...♘d6 next, with an unclear and complex position.

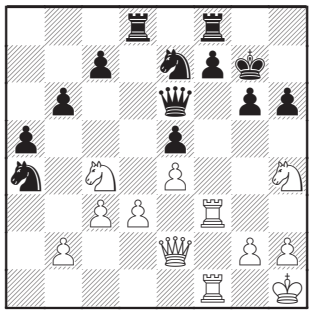
22.♘c4 Attacking the pawn on a5, but also threatening ♘e3-f5.

22.♖f6 was also strong. After 22...♕xf6 23.♖xf6 ♔xf6 24.♘hf3 with d4 next, White has better chances as Black's rooks cannot easily become active.

22...b6? The pawn on a5 was the least of Black's worries.

22...♘g8 23.♕f2 f6 cannot really patch up the kingside after 24.♖g3 g5 25.♘f5+ ♔h8 26.♖h3 and White has a strong attack, who can also mix it up with play in the centre with d4;

22...♘b6 was likely the best chance, though White has excellent chances after 23.♖f6 ♕xf6 24.♖xf6 ♔xf6 25.♕f3+ ♔g7 26.♘xe5 and the queen with the two knights will be notoriously difficult to defend against.



23.♘f5+! This powerful sacrifice breaks down Black's defences.

23...gxf5 24.exf5 ♕f6 Otherwise f6 will happen.

25.♘xe5 The other way to threaten ♘g4 was 25.♘e3.

Judit Polgar, MADRID 1994

Image source: David Llada

MADRID 1994			
GM	**Polgar, Judit**	2630	7.0
GM	**Sokolov, Ivan**	2650	55
GM	**Shirov, Alexei**	2715	5.0
GM	**Kamsky, Gata**	2695	5.0
GM	**Illescas Cordoba, Miguel**	2590	5.0
GM	**Salov, Valery**	2685	4.5
GM	**Tiviakov, Sergei**	2630	4.5
GM	**Magem Badals, Jordi**	2505	3.5
GM	**Bareev, Evgeny**	2685	2.5
GM	**San Segundo Carrillo, Pablo**	2470	2.5

25...♘g8 26.♘g4 ♕g5 27.f6+ ♔h8 28.♖f5 White's attack is devastating. Black's extra piece is the lone knight on a4, so far from the kingside where the game will be decided.

28...♖de8 28...♕h4 29.♖1f4 ♘c5 30.♘e5 traps the black queen.

29.♘e5 ♖xe5 30.♕xe5 ♕g6 31.♖5f3 Threatening ♖g3. White has many ways to win.

31...♘c5 32.♖g3 ♕h7 33.♕xc7 Black's position falls apart. The knight on g8 is particularly a sad sight, without a single square to go to.

33...♖e8 34.h3 ♘e6 35.♕xb6 ♖d8 36.♖ff3 ♖a8 37.♖f2 Avoiding possible attacks by ...♘g5.

37...♘g5 38.h4 ♘e6 39.h5 Ensuring Black cannot play ...h5 and ...♘h6.

39...♘g5 40.♖e3 a4 41.c4 Black is paralysed and White simply wants to advance his pawns.

41...a3 42.bxa3 ♖xa3 43.♕d8 ♖a6 44.♔h2 ♘e6 45.♕c8 ♖d6 #

46.♖xe6! A petite combination.

46...♕xd3 46...♖xe6 47.♕xe6 fxe6 48.f7 and a new queen will appear on f8.

47.♖e8 ♔h7 48.♕g4 ♘xf6 49.♖xf6 Mate will follow on g8.

1-0

Maurizzi played a normal game for his level and that was enough to beat the 2447-rated Oro. The wunderkind played the opening well and his openings are generally well-prepared, but he faltered in the middlegame. In the other games he lost, he was often outplayed in the endgame, as well, both of which

indicate his lower class compared to his opponents.

Oro managed only three draws in the event, against Navara, Ivanchuk, and Moussard. However, things can only improve for him. The modern obsession with prodigies will ensure he receives countless invitations. Combined with the inevitable work on his chess behind the scenes, his future looks secure.

Maurizzi considered his round six win against Bacrot his best game in the event.

Marc'Andria **Maurizzi** - Étienne **Bacrot**

Djerba Masters 2025 Djerba TUN (6.5)

1.e4 e6 The French Defence has been one of the main openings for the Frenchman playing with the black pieces.

2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 Currently this move, leading to the Classical Variation, is more popular than the Winawer Variation after 3...♗b4. It was also Ding Liren's choice in his match with Gukesh.

4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 The most common way of playing against the Classical Variation. In the match Gukesh was experimenting with ♘ce2 ideas.

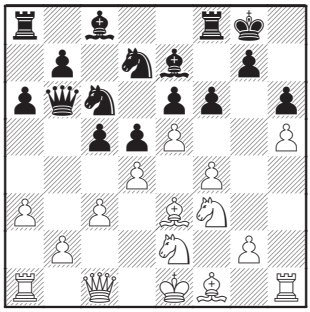
6...♘c6 7.♗e3 a6 One of the main options for Black in this starting position of the Steinitz Variation.

8.♘e2 The move 8.♕d2 is by far the most common move for White.

8...♕b6 9.♕c1 ♗e7 10.c3 0-0 11.h4 The main alternative is 11.g3. Maurizzi prepared this less common alternative for this game.

11...f6 12.h5 h6 So far both players followed theory. Maurizzi's next move was likely the surprise for Bacrot.

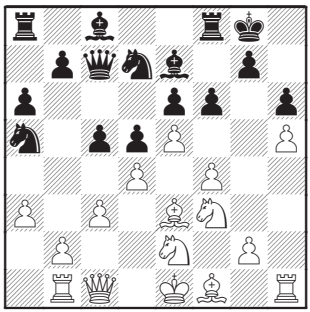
13.a3!?



The main move is 13.♖h3. Still, the engine likes 13.a3, so a professional of Bacrot's calibre was obliged to look at it.

13...♘a5 Black immediately targets the weakened light squares b3 and c4.

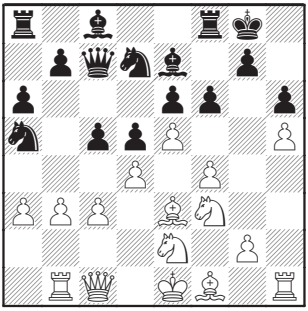
14.♖b1 ♕c7



Not the engine's top choice, but possible.

14...♘c4 was natural. After 15.♘h4 this looks strange, to give up the bishop, but the knight is headed for g6 as soon as possible. *(15.♗f2* is an alternative. *15...cxd4 16.cxd4 ♖f7* freeing the f8-square for the knight, to cover the hole on g6.*)* 15...cxd4 16.cxd4 ♗d8 moving away from the attack after the knight lands on g6. 17.♘g6 fxe5!? an exchange sacrifice, typical for this French structure, which Black can do without. For example, the simple 17...♖f7 is also possible. 18.♘xf8 ♔xf8 19.♗f2 *(19.fxe5 ♘dxe5* gives Black excellent play.*)* 19...e4 with good compensation.

15.b3 White limits the knight's mobility.



15...fxe5?! The moment things start to go downhill for Black.

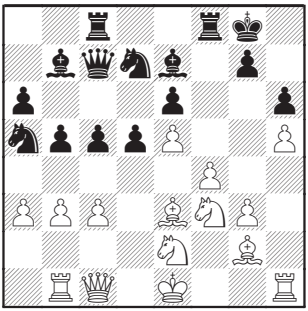
15...♘c6 was still playable. After 16.g3 *(*or *16.g4 fxe5 17.dxe5 b5* with unclear play.*)* 16...cxd4! is the difference with the game. 17.cxd4 ♕a5+! 18.b4 ♕d8 Black managed to weaken the c4-square and will play ...♘b6-c4, with counterplay.

16.dxe5 b5 17.g3! White wants to play ♗g2 and castle short.

17.g4 was possible, but a bit less strong as now the light-squared bishop doesn't have access to the h3-c8 diagonal, from where to target the pawn on e6. 17...♘c6 18.♗g2 ♗b7 19.0-0 a5 leads to unclear play.

17...♗b7 18.♗g2 18.♗h3? d4! would be embarassing.

18...♖ac8



18...♘c6 19.0-0 a5 is similar to the previous note, but here White has 20.♗h3! targeting the pawn on e6. 20...♘d8 21.b4! gaining access to the d4-square, with a dominating position for White;

18...♘xe5!? was probably Black's best attempt to avoid a bind. These types of piece sacrifices are common in the French Defence. 19.fxe5 d4! the necessary follow-up. 20.0-0! it's best for White to return the piece. *(20.♗f4? d3! 21.♘eg1 c4* is winning for Black.*)* 20...dxe3 21.♕xe3 White still keeps control over the position, but Black can defend after 21...♗xf3! 22.♗xf3 ♗g5 23.♘f4 ♖ad8 as the opposite-coloured bishops give him drawing chances.

19.0-0 ♘b6? Black won't get any play on the queenside, so this is the decisive mistake.

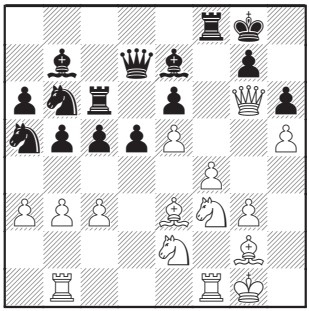
19...♖fd8 with the idea of ...♘f8 was resilient. 20.♕e1 ♘f8 21.♕f2 d4!? 22.cxd4 ♗d5 with some compensation thanks to the fact that the light-squared bishop joined the game.

20.♕c2 The queen targets the g6-square and with Black's pieces almost all on the queenside, there is nobody left to guard it.

20...♕d7 Rushing to e8, but there is no time.

21.♕g6 ♖c6 This loses, but it's not as if Black had much better options.

21...♕e8 22.♕xe6+ ♕f7 23.♗h3 simply wins a pawn with a winning position for White.



22.♘g5! The killer blow. Bacrot didn't want to see the demonstration, so he resigned.

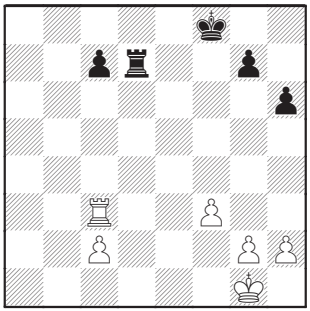
After 22.♘g5 hxg5 23.h6 ♗d8 24.fxg5 White's attack is irresistible. Just take a look at the piled up black pieces on the queenside!

1-0

He sealed the tournament victory with a win over Amin in the penultimate round. What is interesting about this game is that he managed to win an instructive rook endgame.

Marc'Andria **Maurizzi** - Bassem **Amin**

Djerba Masters 2025 Djerba TUN (8.4)



When I first saw this position, I thought that it should be a draw. However, after seeing the remainder of the game, and checking with an engine (of course), I was surprised to find out that White wins relatively easily. The main reason for this is Black's passive rook, which needs to stay on the seventh rank to guard the c7-pawn. With a passive rook Black doesn't have any counterplay, which means that White can freely advance on the whole board.

35.h4 h5 Black stops h5.

36.♖c5 g6 37.♔f2 ♔g7 38.♖c6 The immediate 38.g4 was also possible. White will execute this advance later on.

DJERBA
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From 15 to 23 February 2025

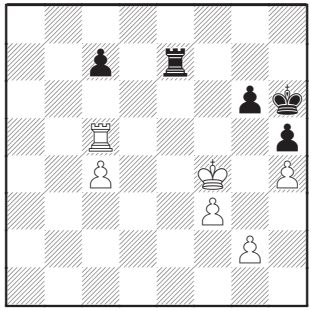
38...♖e7 39.♖c4 ♔f6 40.♖f4+ ♔g7 41.♖e4 Ensuring the king can come to e3 and f4 as Black cannot exchange the rooks, being a pawn down.

41...♖d7 42.♔e3 ♔f6 Unfortunately for Black, he cannot activate his rook.

42...c6 43.♖e6 ♖c7 44.♔d4 would soon lead to the loss of the c-pawn.

43.♖c4 ♖e7+ 44.♔f4 The king is active now and will support the g4-push.

44...♔g7 45.♖c5 ♔h6 46.c4



White can advance at all leasure. 46.g4 was also possible.

46...♖e2 This "activity" is just for show.

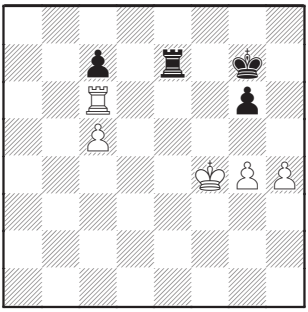
47.g4 White sticks to his plan.

47.♖xc7 was also possible. After 47...♖xg2 48.c5 ♖h2 49.♔g3 ♖c2 50.c6 ♖c4 51.f4 ♖c3+ 52.♔f2 White wins by getting his king to the c-pawn.

47...hxg4 48.fxg4 ♖e7 Going back to passivity.

49.♖c6 Threatening h5.

49...♔g7 50.c5



Black is in a zugzwang now - something's gotta give.

50...♖d7 Amin decides to let the white king cross to the queenside.

50...♔f7 51.♔g5 wins the pawn on g6.; 50...♔h7 51.♔g5 ♖g7 52.♔f6 is equally hopeless.

51.♔e5 ♖f7 51...♔f7 52.♖f6+ ♔g7 53.g5 ♔h7 54.♔e6 and Black's defence collapses as the rook must leave the seventh rank, after which ♖f7 will win the pawn on c7.

52.♔d5 ♖d7+ 53.♔c4 The king will get to c6 eventually.

53...♔f7 54.g5 Securing the f6-square for the rook.

54...♖e7 55.♔b5 ♖d7 56.♖f6+ ♔g7 57.♖f4 A bit of sadism at the end. Before playing ♔c6, which was already possible, White prevents a possible ...♖d4. Amin couldn't suffer anymore and resigned.

1-0

While Judit Polgar was a unique phenomenon in chess, so her path to the top was perhaps inevitable, Maurizzi's big success will certainly open more doors for him. There are many talented youngsters nowadays, so whenever a chance appears it should be grabbed. Maurizzi grabbed his, but he must continue to do so if he's to establish himself among the world's best.

The second place went to another talented youngster, Daniel Dardha from Belgium, who won the event last year. He started with three draws, before beating one of the rating favourites, Maghsoodloo, in round four.

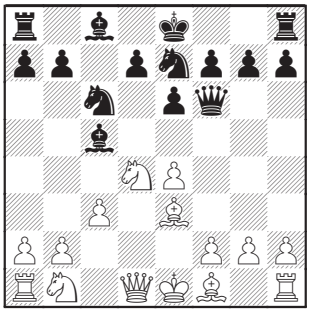
Daniel **Dardha** - Parham **Maghsoodloo**

Djerba Masters 2025 Djerba TUN (4.3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♗f4!? A line that is becoming increasingly popular. With the main lines of the Sicilian being perfectly fine for Black, White often seeks less explored paths early on in the game.

5...♕f6 Black replies with a rare move. The natural 5...d6 is the most common reply.

6.♗e3 ♗c5 7.c3 ♘ge7?! Curiously enough, the moves resemble one of the main lines of the Scotch, arising after 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗c5 5.♗e3 ♕f6 6.c3 ♘ge7. Still, this move appears risky.



8.♕d2?! It appears that Dardha wasn't prepared for the rare 5...♕f6.

8.♘b5! targets the weakened d6-square. After 8...♗xe3 9.♘d6+ ♔f8 10.fxe3 ♘g6 11.♘a3 White will play ♕d2 and castle long, when he can use the f-file to create threats against the black king;

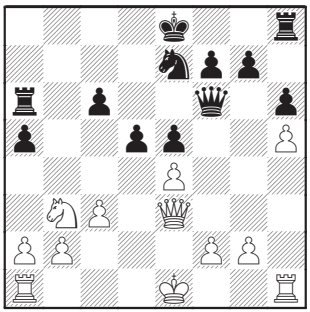
8.b4 ♗b6 9.♘b5 is similar. Here the bishop is not hanging, so Black can castle, though after 9...0-0 10.♗xb6 axb6 11.♕d6 White has a dominating position.

8...d5! Black is fine now.

9.♘xc6 ♗xe3 10.♕xe3 bxc6 11.♘d2 a5 Black will exchange his passive bishop via the a6-square.

12.h4 ♗a6 13.♗xa6 ♖xa6 14.h5 h6 Not allowing h6.

15.♘b3 e5

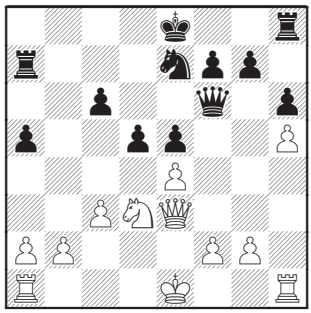


This is already playing with fire. Maghsoodloo shows his usual optimism, but if overdone, it can easily backfire.

15...0-0? 16.♘c5 ♖a7 17.♘xe6 is the reason why Black cannot castle. This line also explains the game move, as Black removes the pawn from e6;

15...♕g5 was relatively safe. After the exchange of queens Black has an acceptable endgame. White cannot avoid the exchange of queens as 16.f4? ♕xg2 attacks both the rook on h1 and the pawn on e4.

16.♘c5 ♖a7 17.♘d3



17...♘c8? This ugly move defends the rook, but worsens the position of the knight.

17...♖d7 was necessary. On the next move Black will castle, with a complex game ahead, for example 18.0-0-0 0-0 19.♘c5 ♖a7 20.♖he1 a4 and so on.

18.exd5 cxd5 19.♕c5! Now the black king is stuck in the centre.

19...♕e6? The final mistake.

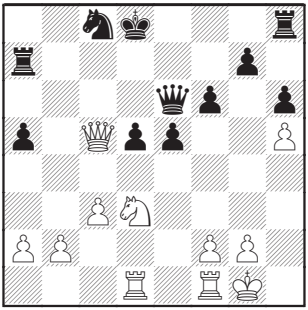
19...♘b6 is the engine's suggestion as the only move to stay in the game. Still, after 20.f4! there are other good options, too, like long or short castle. 20...e4 21.♘e5 his position remains very difficult.

20.0-0 Castling long was also possible.

20...♔d8 White was threatening ♘xe5, so the king moves away from the e-file. Not that it will find piece on the adjacent one...

20...f6 21.♘f4! ♕d7 22.♘xd5 is devastating.

21.♖ad1 f6



22.♘xe5! After ♖xd5 next White will win a lot of material.

1-0

The legend: Vasyl Ivanchuk

Dardha followed up with a win over Oro and another miniature against the legendary Ivanchuk in the last round.

Daniel Dardha – Vasyl Ivanchuk

Djerba Masters 2025 Djerba TUN (9.5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.♘c3 The symmetrical treatment isn't as innocuous as it was considered for many decades. After Ding Liren used it in game two against Gukesh, the line became more popular.

5...h6 Gukesh played 5...a6. The third option is 5...d6, which allows White to gain the bishop pair after 6.♘a4.

6.♗e3 The moves 6.0-0 and 6.h3 are the alternatives.

6...♗b6 Black wants to improve his structure with ...axb6 in case White captures on b6. It was also possible to take on e3.

7.♕d2 Preparing long castle.

7...d6 8.a3 A waiting move, but also one that prepares long castle - after ...axb6 the a-file will be opened, so the a-pawn will be safer on the protected a3-square.

8...♗e6 This is a typical situation of these symmetrical Italians - all possible bishop trades and pawn structure changes are possible, giving rise to different types of positions.

9.♗xe6 White decides to exchange all bishops at once. Naturally, he could also have waited.

9...fxe6 10.♗xb6 axb6 11.d4 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♕e7 After 12...♘xd4 13.♕xd4 0-0 14.e5 may have been something Ivanchuk wanted to avoid, though after 14...♘d5 15.exd6 *(or 15.♘xd5 dxe5! 16.♕xe5 exd5* with no problems for Black.*)* 15...♕xd6 16.0-0 ♖ad8 and Black has little to worry about as the pawn on e6 can easily be defended.

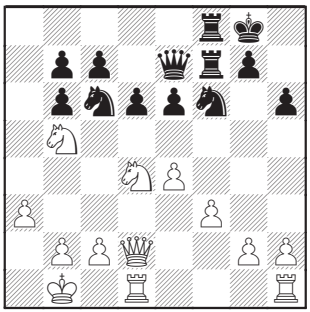
13.0-0-0 0-0 Ivanchuk shows willingness for a sharper fight. It was perfectly possible to copy White and castle long.

14.f3 14.♘db5 ♖ad8 15.♕e2 d5! solves Black's problems by tactical means. After 16.exd5 ♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♖xd5 18.♖xd5 exd5 19.♕xe7 ♘xe7 Black's attack on the f2-pawn ensures that Black doesn't lose a pawn.

14...♖f7 15.♔b1 ♖af8 The doubling of the rooks on the f-file looks rather artificial,

though Ivanchuk may have pursued prophylactic ideas. With heavy pressure on the f-file, Black discourages a potential g4-g5.

16.♘cb5



16...♘e5? A blunder. Ivanchuk lost three games and won none in the whole event. His play showed a clear lack of nerves - he was offering draws in positions that could still be played out, even ones where he was the one who could press, but were unclear enough, like in the penultimate round against Oro. Lack of energy was also notable: he played technical chess (like in the first two rounds against Navara and Moussard), but in order to win against a strong opposition technique alone isn't enough. But his play was also marred by blunders, which came in complex positions, again as result of lack of nerves and energy. Here he misses (or misevaluates) White's next move and the following transformation.

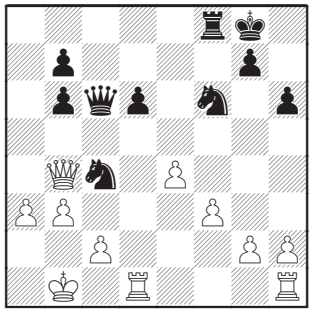
16...♕d7 17.♖he1 ♘xd4 18.♘xd4 ♕e8 would have kept Black's position compact;

16...♘xd4 17.♘xd4 ♘h5 was another idea, with the knight aiming for the f4-square.

17.♘xc7! ♘c4? This is even worse, but objectively speaking Black was lost long-term.

After 17...♕xc7 18.♘xe6 ♕c8 19.♘xf8 ♘e8! this is best, trying to save the pawn on d6. 20.♕d4 ♔xf8 21.♕xb6 White gets three pawns and a rook for two knights, with a winning position.

18.♕b4 ♕xc7 19.♘xe6 ♕c6 20.♘xf8 ♖xf8 21.b3

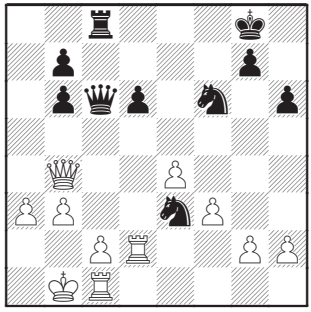


This is the problem with the knight on c4 - it cannot stay there and Black loses the pawn on d6 and likely the one on b6 as well.

21...♘e3 Desperately seeking counterplay, but now the knight has no way out.

21...♘e5 22.♖xd6 ♕c7 23.♕xb6 And it's already four pawns and a rook for two knights.

22.♖d2 ♖c8 23.♖c1



The pawn on c2 is safely defended and White will trap the knight with ♕d4 and/or ♖e2.

1-0

In spite of finishing "only" second, this result is a great success for Dardha and hopefully it will also open some doors for his future progress.

Third place was shared by former prodigy Maghsoodloo and the current World Rapid Champion Murzin. The fall of Maghsoodloo from a stable top 20 player to well-below 2700 is something that only he can explain, but hopefully this solid result will help him as a stepping stone to stabilise his results and play and make a second run for the upper echelons.

Murzin also had a solid tournament, winning two games, against Bacrot and Oro, but he spoiled his result by losing to Maurizzi in the last round. The future is bright for him, even though his recent clashes with the Russian Federation may take some of the focus away.

Three players finished on 50% - Navara, Bacrot and Amin. None can be too happy about it, but at least they didn't finish with a negative score.

The bottom three were Moussard (3.5 points), Ivanchuk (3 points) and Oro (1.5 points).

Each of them is in a different career situation. Moussard, aged 30, is struggling to return to his career-high rating of 2686. Ivanchuk appears to be playing more out of inertia, lacking the energy and nerve that once defined him (recall his emotional moment after the game with Naroditsky at the World Blitz Championship). As for Oro, he likely won't be too disappointed—he realises that much work lies ahead if he hopes to compete on equal terms with these players.

The Djerba Masters was a great event and perhaps time is coming when there is an increased interest in these tournaments. While we all like to watch Carlsen and co. play, variety is indeed the spice of life.

DJERBA MASTERS 2025 15TH FEBRUARY 2025, DJERBA, TUNISIA
FINAL - MONDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2025:

1	France	**Maurizzi, Marc`andria**	2581	7.5/10.0
2	Belgium	**Dardha, Daniel**	2652	6/10.0
3	Iran	**Maghsoodloo, Parham**	2680	5/10.0
4	FID	**Murzin, Volodar**	2657	5/10.0
5	Czech Republic	**Navara, David**	2677	4.5/10.0
6	France	**Bacrot, Etienne**	2640	4.5/10.0
7	Egypt	**Amin, Bassem**	2654	4.5/10.0
8	France	**Moussard, Jules**	2595	3.5/10.0
9	Ukraine	**Ivanchuk, Vasyl**	2619	3/10.0
10	Argentina	**Oro, Faustino**	2447	1.5/10.0

CHESS IN THE UK

THE HASTINGS INTERNATIONAL CHESS CONGRESS

By IM Shaun Taulbut

The 98th Caplin Hastings International Chess Congress took place from December 28, 2024, to January 5, 2025, at the Horntye Park Sports Complex in Hastings, England. As always, the event catered to players of all levels, with the Hastings Masters serving as the main attraction.

The 9-round Swiss tournament drew a mix of seasoned professionals and rising talents, but it was 16-year-old Xue Haowen of China who stole the spotlight.

Xue delivered a dominant performance, finishing unbeaten with 7/9 and becoming the youngest winner in the tournament's history—surpassing Judit Polgar's previous record. Remarkably, he entered the event without any FIDE titles but secured his final Grandmaster norm with this victory.

The Congress was again sponsored by Caplin Systems and the tournament Director was Stuart Conquest. Caplin Systems was founded in 2000 in London and provides financial trading technology, the Chief Executive Officer is John Ashworth. Stuart Conquest, the English Grandmaster is the tournament director of the Gibraltar Congress and won the British Championship in 2008 after a playoff with Keith Arkell and is now bringing his expertise to the Hastings Congress.

Haowen Xue was on top with 7/9. The top British Players were Shreyas Royal and Danny Gormally on 6.5/9.

Here we will look at some of the most interesting games from the event.

We start with an excellent win by Danny Gormally against the Icelandic Grandmaster Stefansson.

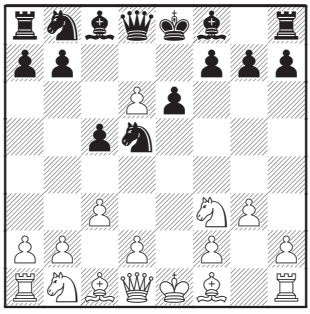
Vignir Vatnar Stefansson - Danny Gormally

Hastings Masters 2024–25 Hastings ENG (8.3)

1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘f3 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 d6 may transpose.

4...d6 5.exd6 e6 5...♕xd6 is the main alternative 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘c6 8.♘a3 ♕e5+ 9.♗e2 ♗g4 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♘c4 ♕xe2+ 12.♕xe2 ♗xe2 13.♔xe2 e6 with an equal position.

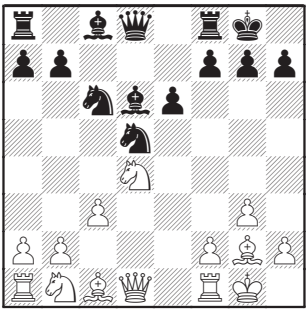
6.g3



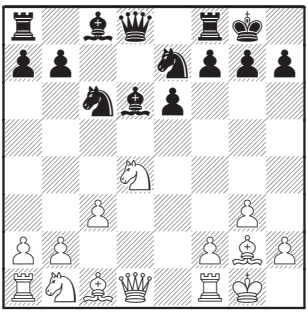
White chooses to fianchetto the king's bishop, a slower treatment with the aim of pressure on the Black queenside.

6...♗xd6 7.♗g2 0-0 8.d4 ♘c6 9.0-0 cxd4 10.♘xd4

MORE MAGAZINES: XSAVA.XYZ



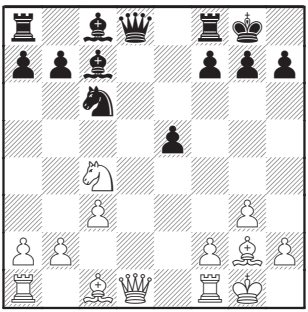
10...♘de7



10...♘xd4 11.♕xd4 ♕c7 gives Black a good game; he can push the white queen back with ...♗c5.

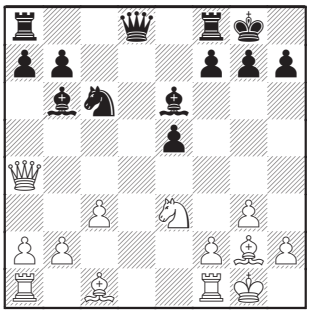
11.♘xc6 ♘xc6 12.♘d2 e5 Preparing to develop the queenbishop and taking a stake in the centre.

13.♘c4 ♗c7 Black offers the exchange of queens not fearing the endgame.



14.♘e3 ♗e6 15.♕a4 White decides to keep the queens on; the alternative is 15.♕e2 ♕c8 16.♖d1 ♖d8 17.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 18.b4 when White has a slight edge.

15...♗b6

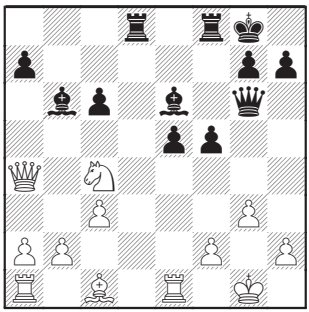


16.♘c4 After 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♕xc6 ♕d3 gives Black a strong initiative for the pawn eg after 18.♖d1 ♕e2 19.♕g2 ♖ad8 20.♕f1 ♕f3 21.♖e1 ♖d7 22.♕g2 ♕f6 Black will double rooks on the d-file and it is difficult for White to develop his queenbishop.

16...♕d3 17.♘e3 If 17.♘xb6 axb6 18.♕e4 ♕xe4 19.♗xe4 ♗xa2 20.♖e1 ♗e6 21.♗e3 b5 22.♗c5 ♖xa1 23.♖xa1 ♖d8 24.♗b6 ♖c8 with a minute edge for Black but this may be the best line for White.

17...♖ad8 18.♗f3 ♕g6 Black has the edge. White can capture on c6 but then he is weak on the light squares.

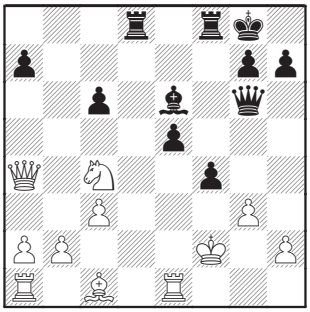
19.♖e1 f5 20.♗xc6 bxc6 21.♘c4



If 21.♕xc6 f4 is winning for Black as the f2 square is unprotected 22.♘g2 fxg3 wins.

21...♗xf2+ A stunning sacrifice exposes the white king.

22.♔xf2 f4



Black plays to open the f-file against the white king.

23.gxf4 If 23.♘xe5 fxg3+ 24.♔g2 ♗d5+ 25.♔h3 ♕h5+ 26.♕h4 *(26.♔xg3 ♖f2 27.♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 28.♔e3 ♕xe5+ 29.♔d2 ♗c4+ 30.♔c2 ♕f5+ 31.♖e4 ♕xe4#)* 26...♗e6+ 27.♔xg3 ♖d3+ 28.♘xd3 ♕f3#.

23...♕h5 24.♖xe5 Again if 24.♘xe5 ♕xh2+ 25.♔e3 ♕g3+ 26.♘f3 ♗d5 is winning 27.♖f1 ♖fe8+ 28.♔d4 ♖e4+ 29.♔c5 ♖xa4 is winning.

24...♕xh2+ 25.♔f3 ♕h3+ 26.♔f2 ♕h4+ 27.♔f3 After 27.♔g1 ♕g3+ 28.♔h1 ♗d5+ 29.♖xd5 ♖xd5 30.f5 ♖dxf5 and mate is forced.

27...♗g4+

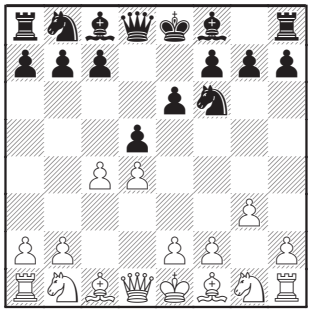
0-1

Now a win by Haowen Xue against the Ukrainian grandmaster Kovchan.

Alexander **Kovchan – Xue** Haowen

Hastings Masters 2024–25 Hastings ENG (7.4)

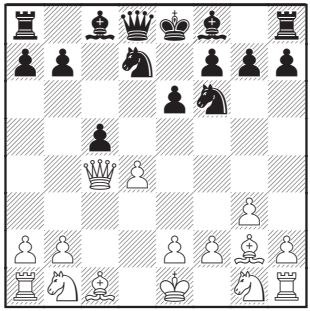
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5



The Catalan, a strong positional line for White.

4.♗g2 Also playable is 4.♘f3 dxc4 5.♕a4+ ♘bd7 6.♕xc4 c5.

4...dxc4 5.♕a4+ ♘bd7 6.♕xc4 c5



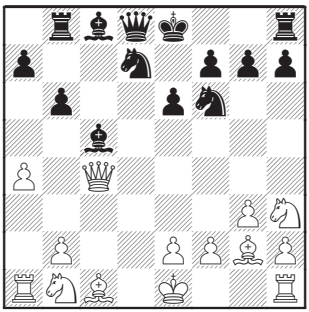
Black must play actively to avoid a disadvantage and this game shows the way.

7.dxc5 After 7.♘f3 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘b6 9.♕d3 ♗c5 10.♕b5+ ♘bd7 11.♘b3 a6 12.♕d3 ♗a7 is slightly better for White.

7...♗xc5 8.♘h3 Keeping the line of the kingsbishop open; 8.♘f3 a6 9.♕d3 b5 10.♘g5 ♖b8 is equal.

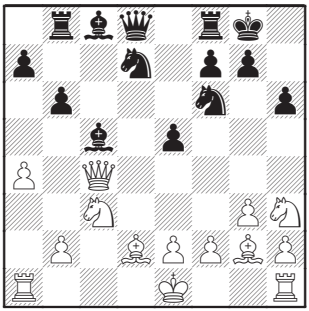
8...♖b8 Unpinning the b-pawn is important to be able to develop the queenside.

9.a4 b6



10.♗f4 e5 11.♗d2 h6 Black limits the White pieces notably the knight on h3.

12.♘c3 0-0



13.g4 White goes for complications as Black is positionally better, after 13.0-0 ♗b7 14.♗xb7 ♖xb7 15.♖ad1 ♕c8 16.♔g2 ♗d4 Black has the edge.

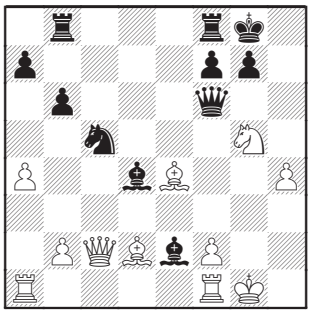
13...♗d4 14.g5 hxg5 15.♘xg5 ♘c5 16.♘d5 16.b4 ♗xf2+ 17.♔xf2 *(17.♔d1 ♗e3 18.♖a2 ♗xg5 19.bxc5 ♗e6* is winning for Black *20.♕d3 ♕xd3 21.exd3 ♗xa2 22.♗xg5 bxc5 23.♘xa2 ♖b2 24.♗c6 ♖xa2 25.♖e1 ♘g4)* 17...♕xd2.

16...♗b7 17.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 The attack on f2 forces White to castle.

18.0-0 If 18.♗xb7 ♕xf2+ 19.♔d1 ♖xb7 20.e3 ♗xe3 21.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 22.♔xe2 ♗xd2 23.♔xd2 f6 24.♘f3 ♘b3+ winning the exchange and the game.

18...e4 19.h4 19.b4 ♗xa1 20.bxc5 ♖bd8 21.♗e3 ♗d4 22.♘xe4 ♗xe4 23.♗xe4 ♗xe3 24.fxe3 ♕g5+ 25.♔h1 ♕xc5 with a decisive advantage for Black who is ahead the exchange.

19...♗a6 20.♕c2 ♗xe2 21.♗xe4



21...g6 22.♖a3 After 22.♗e3 ♗xf1 23.♖xf1 ♖bd8 24.b4 ♘xe4 25.♕xe4 ♖fe8 Black is winning.

22...♘xe4 23.♘xe4 ♕f5 24.♗h6 If 24.♖e1 ♗xf2+ 25.♘xf2 ♕xc2 26.♖xe2 ♖fd8 27.♘e4 ♖xd2 28.♘xd2 ♖d8 29.h5 ♕d1+ 30.♔f2 ♖xd2 is winning.

24...♗xf1 25.♗xf8 ♖c8 26.♕b1 After 26.♘f6+ ♕xf6 27.♕xc8 ♕xf2+ 28.♔h1 ♕g1#.

26...♗xf2+ 27.♔xf1 ♖c1+ 28.♕xc1 ♗e3+ Winning the white queen and afterwards one of the white minor pieces.

0-1

Shreyas Royal won the following game in fine style

Shreyas **Royal** - Tor Fredrik **Kaasen**

Hastings Masters 2024–25 Hastings ENG (9.4)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 3...c5; 3...♗b4+.

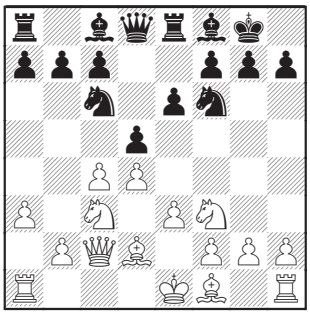
4.♘c3 ♗b4 4...♗e7.

5.♕a4+ ♘c6 Black must play this move to protect the bishop leaving a pawn counter by ...c5 blocked.

6.e3 0-0 7.♕c2 A simple retreat have disrupted the Black development.

7...♖e8 7...b6 8.♗d2 ♘e7 is also playable.

8.♗d2 ♗f8 9.a3

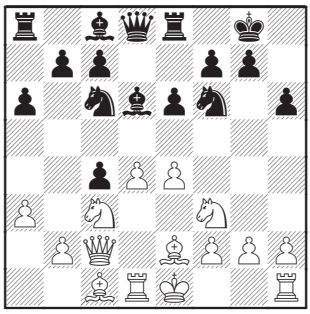


9...h6 9...e5 is best here utilising the rook on e8 eg 10.♘xe5 *(10.cxd5 ♘xd4 11.exd4 exd4+ 12.♘e2 ♕xd5* with a strong initiative for the piece*)* 10...♘xe5 11.dxe5 ♖xe5 12.cxd5 ♗f5 13.♗d3 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 ♘xd5 15.♕d4 ♖h5 16.g4 *(16.♖d1 ♘f6* with equality*)* 16...c5.

10.♖d1 a6 11.♗c1 White dissuades Black from playing ..e5 because of the pressure from the White rook on d1.

11...♗d6 Worth consideration is 11...♘a5 12.c5 ♘c6 13.♗e2 e5 14.dxe5 ♘xe5.

12.♗e2 dxc4 13.e4

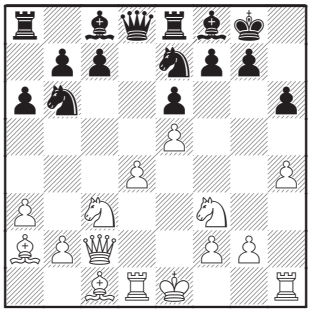


Taking control of the centre rather than recapturing on c4 and preparing e5.

13...♘d7 Black could try 13...e5 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 15.♘xe5 ♖xe5 16.f4 ♖e8 17.e5 ♘g4 18.exd6 *(18.g3* is better for White*)* 18...♕h4+ 19.g3 ♕h3 with complications, e.g. 20.d7 ♗xd7 21.♖xd7 ♕g2 22.♖f1 ♘xh2.

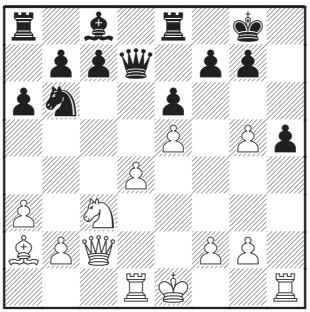
14.e5 ♗f8 15.♗xc4 White recaptures the pawn with a space advantage.

15...♘b6 16.♗a2 ♘e7 17.h4



White threatens ♗b1 and has h5 to follow if Black plays..g6 so Black decides to play ..h5 himself.

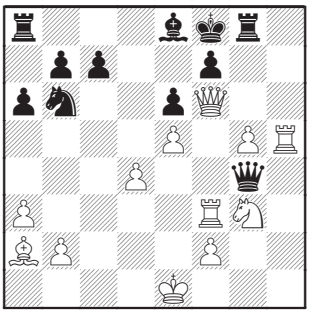
17...h5 18.♗g5 ♕d7 19.♗xe7 ♗xe7 20.♘g5 ♗xg5 21.hxg5



21...♕c6 If 21...g6 22.♘e4 is decisive.

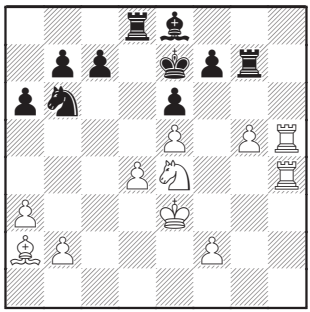
22.♖xh5 ♕xg2 23.♕h7+ ♔f8 24.♘e2 24.♕h8+ ♔e7 25.♕xg7 ♕g1+ 26.♔d2 ♕xf2+ 27.♔c1 is winning for White.

24...♕g4 25.♘g3 Bd7 26.♕h8+ ♔e7 27.♕xg7 ♖g8 28.♕f6+ ♔f8 29.♖d3 ♗e8 30.♖f3



30...♘d7 If 30...♕xd4 31.♕xe6 is winning as f7 collapses.

31.♕f4 ♕xf4 32.♖xf4 ♔e7 33.♘e4 ♖d8 34.♔e2 ♖g7 35.♔e3 ♘b6 36.♖fh4

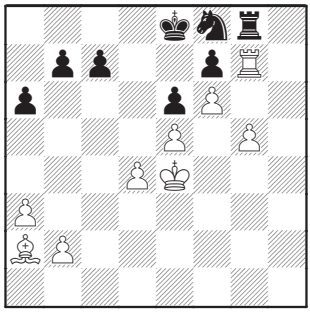


White has a bind on the dark squares as well as the extra pawn

36...♗c6 37.♖h7 ♖xh7 38.♖xh7 ♖g8 If 38...♗xe4 39.♔xe4 ♖g8 40.f4 ♔e8 41.f5 ♖xg5 42.fxe6 fxe6 43.♗xe6 ♔d8 44.d5 ♘c4 45.♖d7+ ♔e8 46.♖xc7 ♘xe5 47.d6 is winning.

39.f4 ♗xe4 40.♔xe4 ♘d7 41.f5 ♘f8 If 41...♖xg5 42.fxe6.

42.f6+ ♔e8 43.♖g7



43...♖h8 44.d5 ♖h4+ 45.♔f3 ♖h2 45...♖h3+ 46.♔g4 ♖h1 47.dxe6 is winning for White.

46.dxe6 fxe6 47.g6

1-0

HASTINGS MASTERS 2024-25 HASTINGS ENG SAT 28TH DEC 2024 - SUN 5TH JAN 2025
LEADING FINAL ROUND 9 STANDINGS:

Rk	SNo	Name	Ti	FED	Rtg	Pts
1	6	**Xue, Haowen**		CHN	2502	7
2	1	**Zhang, Pengxiang**	GM	CHN	2567	6.5
	2	**Laurent-Paoli, Pierre**	GM	FRA	2559	6.5
	5	**Royal, Shreyas**	GM	ENG	2522	6.5
	7	**Ghazarian, Kirk**	GM	USA	2501	6.5
	10	**Gasanov, Eldar**	GM	UKR	2476	6.5
	13	**Gormally, Daniel W**	GM	ENG	2424	6.5
8	4	**Stefansson, Vignir Vatnar**	GM	ISL	2537	6
	8	**Seo, Jung Min**	IM	SWE	2491	6
	9	**Bazakutsa, Svyatoslav**	IM	UKR	2484	6
	12	**Kovchan, Alexander**	GM	UKR	2455	6
	14	**Zhou, Yang-Fan**	IM	ENG	2424	6
	17	**Grutter, Tim**	FM	NED	2379	6
	20	**Siva, Mahadevan**	IM	IND	2349	6
	23	**Lux, Hugo De Melo**	FM	BRA	2327	6
	27	**Badacsonyi, Stanley**	FM	ENG	2266	6
17	3	**Boyer, Mahel**	IM	FRA	2526	5.5
	11	**Kaasen, Tor Fredrik**	IM	NOR	2473	5.5
	15	**Golding, Alex**	FM	ENG	2405	5.5
	16	**Vestby-Ellingsen, Mads**	IM	NOR	2382	5.5
	19	**Waldhausen Gordon, Frederick**	FM	SCO	2355	5.5
	21	**Roux, Baptiste**	FM	FRA	2338	5.5
	25	**Nielsen, Andre**	FM	NOR	2276	5.5
	26	**Bozinakis, Pavlos**		GRE	2271	5.5
	33	**Golding, James**		ENG	2203	5.5
	40	**Brown, Tom**		WLS	2118	5.5
	53	**Verbytski, Oleg**		ENG	2033	5.5
	56	**Rida, Ruqayyah**	WFM	ENG	2019	5.5
	64	**Struck, Lasse**		GER	1983	5.5

CHESS IN THE UK

KEITH ARKELL WINS THE FIRST CHEADLE OPEN

By IM Shaun Taulbut

The first Cheadle Open was won by Keith Arkell with 6/6 with Mike Surtees second with 5/6, followed by five players in shared third. Susan Caldwell played her first tournament since the 1980s and started well with 3/3.

Organized by the Cheshire and North Wales Chess Association, the six-round event took place in the Altitude Suite at the 4-star Cheadle Village Hotel. The tournament was administered by the International Arbiter Matthew Carr.

Commenting on the English Chess Forum, Keith Arkell had this to say after his success: "I think it's fair to say that things are now moving in a good direction.

Huge thanks to Sarah Longson for the generous invitation, and to the kind hearted Gareth Ellis for further support. It was a lovely tournament, smashingly organised and ticking all the boxes we chess players like to see ticked.

I hope the idea of doing a weekend style tournament midweek catches on, even though in this case it gives me zero time to rest before Blackpool Open, where I'm on a hat-trick, having won there on my last two visits - back in 2012 and 2015".

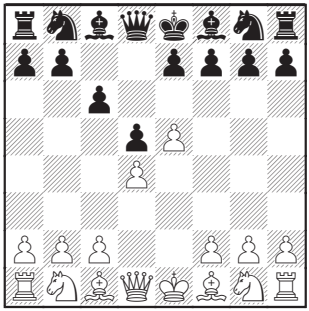
Here we will look at some of the most exciting games from the tournament.

Keith Arkell's grinding positional style was shown to good effect in his win against Gerald Moore

Geoffrey R Moore - Keith Arkell

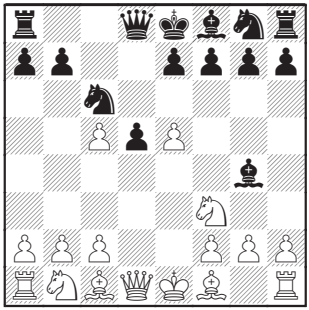
1st Cheadle Open 2025 Cheadle ENG (3.1)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 The Advance variation challenges Black but importantly the Black queenbishop can develop easily.



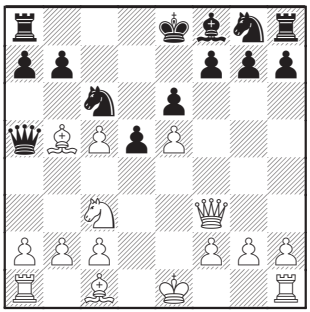
3...c5 4.dxc5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 cxd4 6.cxd4 ♗g4 with an equal position.

4...♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗g4

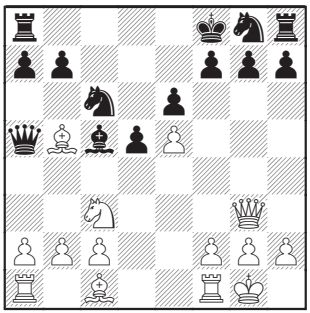


6.♗b5 After 6.c3 ♘ot 6..♘xe5 *(6...e6 7.b4 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 ♘xe5 9.♕g3 ♘c6 10.♗d3* with a minute edge for White*)* 7.♘xe5 ♗xd1 8.♗b5+ winning.

6...♗xf3 7.♕xf3 ♕a5+ 8.♘c3 e6



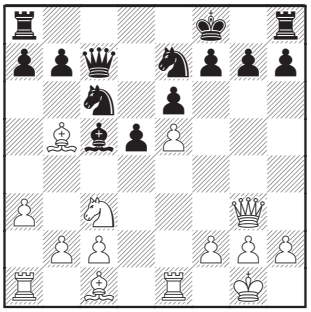
9.0-0 ♗xc5 10.♕g3 ♔f8



10...♗f8 is the alternative but this move has advantages in terms of development

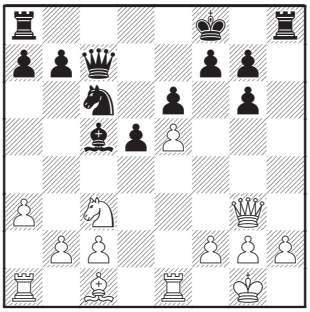
11.a3 Worth consideration is 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♗d2 ♕c7 (12...♕a6 13.b4 ♗xb4 *(13...♗e7 14.♖ab1)* 14.♘xd5 ♗xd2 15.♘c7 ♕b7 16.♘xa8 ♕xa8 17.♖ab1 traps the bishop on d2 with a winning advantage) 13.♘a4.

11...♕c7 12.♖e1 ♘ge7



13.♗d3 ♘g6 14.♗xg6 Better is 14.b4 and if 14..♗d4 *(14...♗e7 15.♗b2 a6 16.♘e2* with a slight edge for White*)* 15.♘b5.

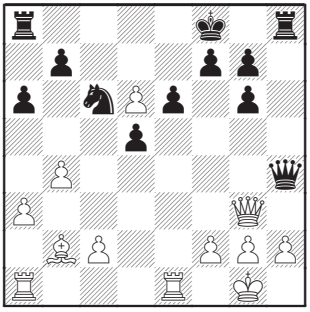
14...hxg6



Black has a slight edge as his rook on h8 comes into play.

15.b4 ♗e7 16.♘b5 ♕d8 17.♗b2 a6 18.♘d6 Unattractive is 18.♘d4 ♖c8 with good play for Black down the c-file.

18...♗xd6 19.exd6 ♕h4

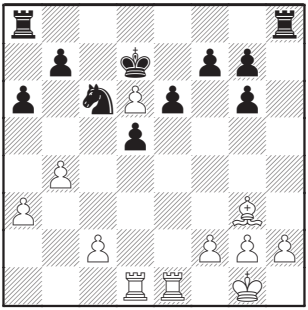


Forcing an exchange of queens.

20.♗e5 ♕xg320...♘xe5 21.♕xe5 ♖h5 22.♕g3 ♖d8 23.♖ad1 ♕xg3 24.hxg3 b5 Black is better.

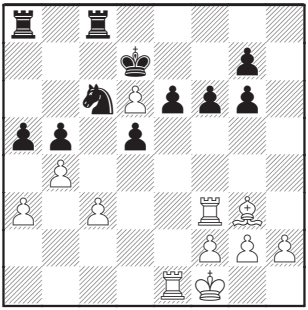
21.♗xg3 ♔e8 Black moves his king to blockade the White pawn on d6.

22.♖ad1 ♔d7



23.♔f1 b5 Preventing c4.

24.♖d3 a5 25.c3 ♖hc8 26.♖f3 f6



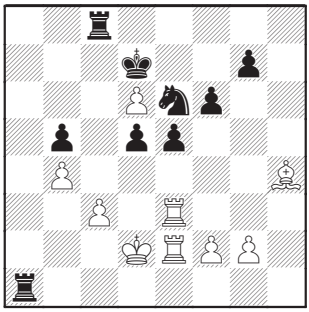
Black prepares…e5.

27.♖fe3 axb4 28.axb4 28.♖xe6 bxc3 29.♖e7+ ♘xe7 30.♖xe7+ ♔d8 31.♗f4 ♖xa3 32.♔e2 ♖c4 33.g3 ♖e4+ 34.♖xe4 dxe4 winning.

28...♘d8 29.♔e2 ♖a2+ 30.♔d1 g5 Black controls f4 and White runs out of useful moves.

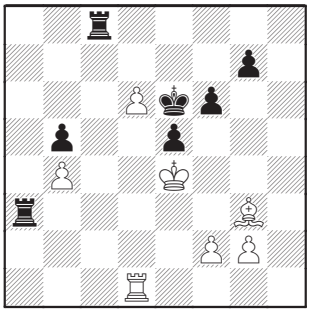
31.♖1e2 ♖a1+ 32.♔d2 e5 Blocking out the white bishop.

33.h4 gxh4 34.♗xh4 ♘e6



35.♗g3 d4 36.cxd4 ♘xd4 Winning material.

37.♖e1 ♖a2+ 38.♔d3 ♘c2 39.♔e4 ♘xe1 40.♖xe1 ♔e6 41.♖d1 ♖a3



With the deadly threat of ..f5+

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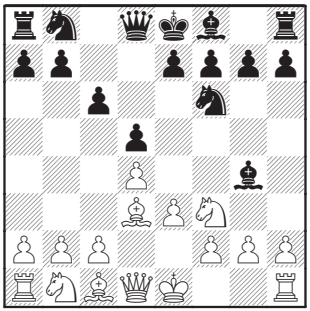
Sarah Longson organised the tournament and won this miniature in good style.

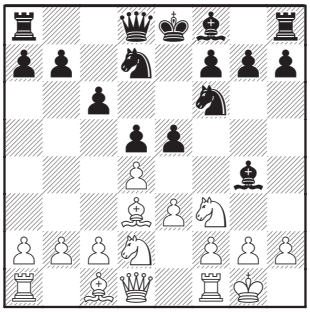
Alan Hall - Sarah N Longson

1st Cheadle Open 2025 Cheadle ENG (3.5)

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e3 c6 4.♗d3 ♗g4



5.♘bd2 ♘bd7 6.0-0 e5



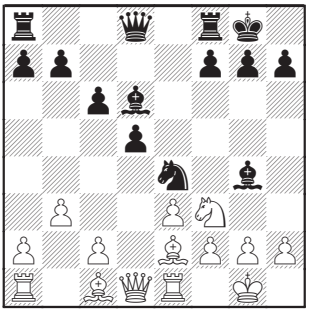
7.dxe5 ♘xe5 8.♗e2 8.h3 ♘xd3 9.cxd3 ♗h5 with a slight edge for Black.

8...♘xf3+ 9.♘xf3 9.♗xf3 ♗xf3 10.♘xf3 ♗e7 11.b3 0-0 12.♗b2 ♘e4 with a minute edge for Black.

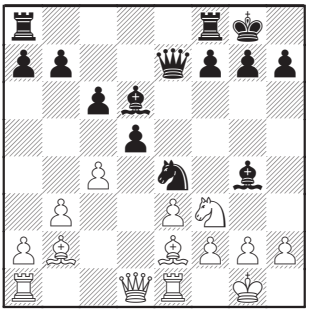
9...♗d6 A strong move eyeing the White kingside.

10.♖e1 Now White is worse; 10.b3 ♘e4 11.♗b2 0-0 is better.

10...0-0 11.b3 ♘e4



12.♗b2 ♕e7 13.c4



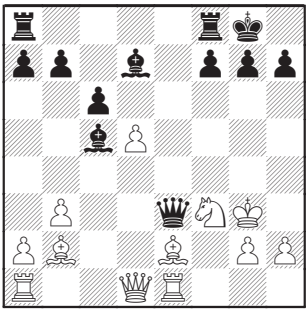
Allowing a combination:

13...♗c5 Black could have played the winning 13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 (14.gxf3 ♕g5+ 15.♔f1 *(15.♔h1 ♘xf2#)* 15...♗xh2 mates) 14...♗xh2+ 15.♔xh2 (15.♔f1 dxc4 16.♕d4 *(16.♗xe4 ♕xe4 17.♕d4 ♕xd4 18.♗xd4 ♗d6 19.bxc4 b6)* 16...c3) 15...♕h4+ 16.♔g1 ♕xf2+ 17.♔h2 ♕xb2 18.cxd5 ♕e5+ 19.♔g1 cxd5.

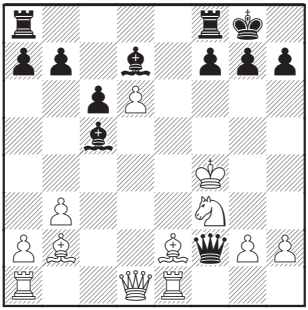
14.cxd5 14.♘d4 Stops Black's threat, now Black has another sacrifice.

14...♘xf2 15.♔xf2 Best is 15.♕c2 ♗xe3 16.♔f1 cxd5 17.♗d3 ♕c5 18.♗xh7+ ♔h8 when Black is slightly better.

15...♕xe3+ 16.♔g3 ♗d7



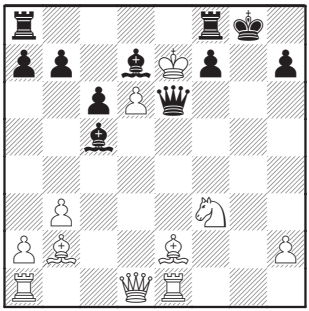
17.d6 ♕f2+ 18.♔f4



18...g5+ 19.♔xg5 19.♔e5 f6+ 20.♔e4 ♕e3#.

19...♕xg2+ 20.♔f6 ♕g6+ 21.♔e7 Sportingly allowing the mate (21.♔e5 ♕f5#).

21...♕e6#



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Arkell's Endings is Available from Ginger GM and New in Chess.

1ST CHEADLE OPEN 2025 CHEADLE ENG TUE 4TH FEB 2025 - THU 6TH FEB 2025
LEADING FINAL ROUND 6 STANDINGS:

Rk	SNo	Name	FED	Rtg	TB1
1	1	**GM Arkell, Keith C**	ENG	2424	6
2	5	**Surtees, Mike J**	ENG	2129	5
3	2	**CM Jackson, Edward**	ENG	2274	4
4	3	**FM Longson, Alexander**	ENG	2243	4
5	7	**Byron, Alan M**	ENG	2086	4
6	9	**WFM Longson, Sarah N**	ENG	2040	4
7	10	**Zhu, Yaoyao**	ENG	2030	4
8	4	**Caldwell, Susan L**	ENG	2150	3.5
9	12	**Cook, Michael Anthony**	GRE	1947	3.5
10	24	**Bamford, Paul**	ENG	1704	3.5
11	8	**Moore, Geoffrey R**	ENG	2061	3
12	11	**Newton, Robert A**	ENG	1962	3
12	13	**Nyamandi, Langutani Lucas**	RSA	1947	3
14	21	**Alamri, Abdulaziz**	ENG	1775	3

SCOOPING HISTORY

A PREVIOUSLY UNRECOGNISED PHILIDOR GAME FROM THE MATCH AGAINST PHILIP STAMMA IN 1747

By Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE

François-André Danican Philidor, the dominant force of 18th-century chess, revolutionised strategy with his famous maxim, "pawns are the soul of chess." His 1747 victory over Philip Stamma confirmed his supremacy, yet many of his games have been lost. Now, new evidence may reveal a forgotten masterpiece, shedding fresh light on his genius.

That illustrious French exponent of chess, Andre Danican Philidor, is often cited as the first unofficial world chess champion, or wielder of the sceptre, as some contemporaries put it. True, Philidor dominated in the great capital cities of his day, Paris and London, but I wonder whether it's truly possible to speak of a world champion, until the advent of steamship travel in the later 19th century, which genuinely shrank the globe to manageable proportions.

One of the tragedies of Philidor's reign was that his notebooks were never published in their entirety, are now presumed lost and that his admirers (and legatees of such books) chose mainly to publish the games with flashy sacrifices, played at huge odds or as part of blindfold simultaneous displays. Here are a couple of typical examples of that which has survived.

François-André Danican Philidor vs. Count Brühl

Match, London, circa 1790

White to play - position after …h5

The opening looks like a science fiction version of some games from the 1963 Tal-Botvinik World Championship match where Tal adopted the sequence 1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5

1.♘h3 ♕d7 2.♘f4 ♗f7 3.g5 ♕f5 4.d4 ♕e4+ 5.♕e2 ♕xh1 6.g6 e6

Overlooking the check on b5. He had to consolidate with 6…c6 or 6… ♘c6 7. gxf7+ ♔xf7 when White will continue 8. ♗e3 and 9. O-O-O with (adequate?) compensation for the sacrificed material.

7.♕b5+ ♘d7 8.gxf7+ ♔d8 9.fxg8=♕ ♖xg8 10.♘xe6+ ♔c8 11.♗e3 ♕xh4 12.♕xd5 ♗e7 12… c6 was the last chance to defend.

13.♗a6!

Leading to a precisely calculated forced conclusion.

Stockfish gives the following: 13…♖b8 (13...bxa6?? 14.♕c6 ♗b4+ 15.c3 ♗a5 16.♕xa8+ ♘b8 17.♘c5 ♖e8 18.♕b7+ ♔d8 19.♕g2 ♔c8 20.♗g5!) 14.♘c5 ♗xc5 15.♕xg8+ ♕d8 16.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 17.♗e2 ♗b4+ 18.c3 ♗f8 19.♗xh5 b5 20.O-O-O, when two extra pawns and the bishop pair are sufficient to secure White's win.

François-André Danican Philidor vs. Count Brühl

Match, London, circa 1790

position after …♗b4+

1.♔f2! Philidor grasped to perfection the necessity to avoid exchanges when in possession of a huge spatial advantage, and in comparison with this, the displacement of the king is a minor evil.

1…♘ge7 2.♘f3 a6 Black's moves are helpfully irrelevant; meanwhile Philidor continues with the construction of his grand edifice.

3.a3 ♗a5 4.b4 ♗b6 5.♗e3 O−O The most lunatic area available as a refuge for his king. Black should have sought to organise …O-O-O.

Philidor's typical constriction strategy has been much too successful to lead to much

in the way of combination. Interestingly, Philidor's strategy in this game has echoes in two distinctly modern opening variations, although we can be almost sure that there was no direct influence involved

.

a) Liebersohn vs. Uhlmann

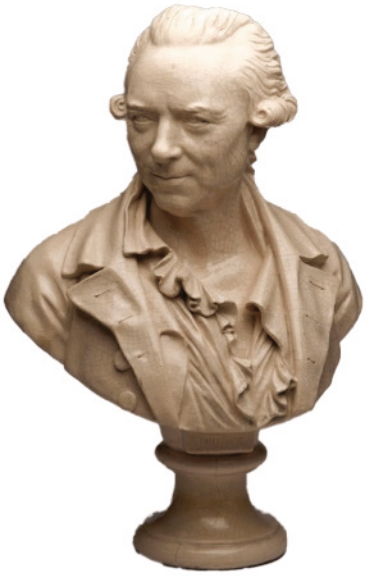
Leipzig, 1965

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.c3 ♘c6 7.♘df3 ♕b6 8.g3 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♗b4+ 10.♔f2 f5 11.♔g2 ♕d8 12.♗d3 ♘b6 13.♘e2 ♗d7 14.h3 ♗e7 15.g4

b) Tal vs. Pachman

Bled, 1961

(Tal's speciality, first served up in his match against Botvinnik, as noted before):
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.h4 h6 5.g4 ♗d7 6.h5 c5 7.c3 e6 8.f4 ♕b6 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10.♘a3 cxd4 11.cxd4 O-O-O 12.♘c2 ♔b8 13.♗d3 ♘ge7 14.♖b1 ♘a5 15.♗d2 ♖c8 16.b4 Tal won in 41 moves.



François-André Danican Philidor

…and after these examples, let us return to Philidor once more:

6…♗g8 9.♗b1 ♘d8 10.♘h4 It is obvious that a thematic sacrifice is coming on g6.

10… ♘f7 11. ♘g6+ ♘xg6 After 11... hxg6 12.hxg6+ ♘h6 White wins as he pleases as Black's kingside pieces lack decent moves.

14.♗xg6 ♗h7 15. ♕b1! ♖ae8 An extremely forlorn expedient, but 15... ♗g8 16. f5 or 15... ♗xg6 16. ♕xg6 ♖f7 17. f5! is also winning.

16.♗xh7 ♖e7 17.♗g6 ♔g8 18.g5 ♘f5+ and White mated in two with 19.♕xf5 ♖xf5 20.♖h8 mate.

However, I now believe that I have discovered an important Philidor game, played against an opponent of undoubted strength, on even terms and in a match which represented a vital breakthrough for our hero

It's my own discovery! This month I hope to reveal a colossal advance in our knowledge of the early history of modern chess. The 1747 match in London between Stamma and Philidor is the earliest recorded contest between two leading protagonists, which might be considered decisive for determining the wielder of the sceptre of the chess world. Sadly, although Philidor himself bequeathed no fewer than 20 volumes of his notebooks to posterity, his later interpreters (Atwood and Walker) chose to publish only a restricted selection of the maestro's games. For that reason, hidden away in some aristocratic library of unknown provenance, there may well be an undiscovered treasure trove of games by Philidor, played at the height of his powers against opposition worthy of his steel.

Slaughter's Coffee House in St Martin's Lane, London, where the match took place in 1747

Philip Stamma, usually known as Stamma of Aleppo, since he was a native of that Arab town in Syria, was a belated representative of the great Arabic school of chess. Indeed, what we now call the Queen's Gambit, was then known as the Gambit of Aleppo, in Stamma's honour, since he played it so frequently. Indeed, Stamma appears to have been the sole leading player of his day, who preferred to open with 1.d4 rather than 1.e4.

Stamma travelled extensively in Europe and in 1737 published in Paris an *Essai sur le jeu des échecs*, consisting of one hundred endings, in the ancient Islamic style of such practitioners as As Suli and Al Lajlaj. The book contains a dedication to Lord Harrington, a keen lover of the game, who may well have been a co-sponsor, backing Stamma, in the great contest against Philidor.

From Paris, Stamma journeyed to England, where in 1745 he published a revised version of his French book, under the title of *The Noble Game of Chess*. The revisions were important, since they included a collection of seventy-four openings, among which was the Queen's Gambit, which he alone strongly advocated.

Ahead of his time, was the circumstance that Stamma introduced into Europe (in both works) the algebraic notation, a useful innovation to simplify comprehension of printed chess moves, which I only succeeded in persuading *The Times* to adopt as late as 1986!

As a player, Stamma seems to have been less gifted than as an author, since, in his match against the young Philidor in 1747, held in Slaughter's Coffee House in St Martin's Lane, London, he was beaten by +8-1=1. Philidor gave him the odds of the move in every game and allowed Stamma to count all draws as won by Stamma. Thus, Philidor won eight games, lost one and drew one, with the formal tally (after adjustment for the odds scoring system) emerging as eight points to two in the Frenchman's favour.

This result established Philidor as undoubtedly the leading player in the eighteenth century. For nearly fifty years he was what we would now call World Champion, though in my opinion, it was premature to speak of a world champion, until, as noted earlier in this column, the later advent of oceanic steam travel, which essentially shrank the globe to manageable proportions.

Of course the idea that Philidor was a sort of proto-World Champion for the second half of the 18th century is absolutely true in terms

of his reputation in major chess centres (Paris and London), and makes the recovery of any information about his games a valuable achievement. It is more a matter of conjecture in terms of strength of play because of the limited evidence - with some modern writers claiming that the Italian (Modenese) authors like Ponziani must have been stronger.

This is unprovable either way as they never played or met each other - though my own view is that Philidor had far more original ideas, way ahead of his time, whatever score one awards to the tactical accuracy of his games and analysis, when subjected to the harsh and unforgiving glare of 21st century analytical engines.

Furthermore, the history of chess indicates that stronger players tend to gravitate and flourish in populous conurbations, Baghdad, Madrid, Paris, London, Moscow… hence the likelihood of aficionados from Modena being superior to the practitioners from the great cities of London and Paris, strikes me as doubly implausible.

According to the *chess encyclopaedia* edited by Grandmaster Emeritus Harry Golombek, OBE, Philidor, born in 1726 near Paris, was remarkably precocious, both in music and chess. By the age of eleven he had a motet performed at the Chapel Royal in Versailles and he was already a fine chess-player by his early teens. The best player in France, M. de Kermur, Sire de Légal, took an interest in his chess education. At first it seems Légal gave Philidor the odds of a Rook, then, after three more years, had to play him level and finally he was beaten by his erstwhile pupil . It goes without saying, that the moves of such games have been lost in the mists of time, or, given the exclusive Francophone connection, the equally obscuring *neiges d'antan*.

Already for some years, Philidor, had been considered the best player in France. It is interesting to observe that he never regarded himself as a professional chess-player, but more as a musician, who supplemented his income by playing chess and giving blindfold displays. Philidor had discovered his gift for playing blindfold, so in 1744, before an awe-struck public, he played two games simultaneously and blindfold. Any master could do this nowadays and more; but Philidor was the first to perform the feat in Europe. It is said that Philidor also travelled to Prussia where he astonished no less a luminary than Frederick the Great, with his mental skills in this medium.

In 1745, he visited the Netherlands and there he made an important contact with some officers of the British army, at that time engaged in military action. This was a fortunate development for him, where he had come with a musical company, that soon became penniless, but Philidor's plight was relieved by the chess-playing officers of the British army, who also gave him valuable introductions to chess enthusiasts in England.

In 1747 Philidor utilized these introductions on a visit to England, where he demonstrated how much greater a player he was than any of his contemporaries by beating Philip Stamma in their Match at odds, in London, by an overwhelming margin. This was an astonishing feat, since Philidor gave Stamma the odds of the move and the formidable advantage that any drawn game should count as a win for Stamma.

From London, Philidor published in 1749 the celebrated *Analyze du jeu des Echecs*. The theme of the work - that 'pawns are the soul of chess' - was so modern as to be about one hundred years before its time. As a writer and player myself, I would find if totally comprehensible that Philidor would have wished to celebrate his triumph against Stamma by including at least one example of his prowess (even with the names suppressed) in his new book!

By the early 1770s, he was again employed in playing chess and giving blindfold displays. He now made yearly visits to England and in particular to London, which had become one of the most important centres of chess in Europe. An arrangement was made by which he taught chess at the London Chess Club and spent the spring in London.

Whilst he was in England the French Revolution broke out and he was put on the proscribed list of emigrés. This was a terrible blow for Philidor, since it separated him from his family and most of his friends. These made repeated efforts to get him removed from the proscribed list but to no avail. He died in London in 1795 and, by a cruel turn of fate, three days later his name was indeed removed from the list of emigres who were not allowed to return. It is ironic that Philidor was the great proselytiser of the power of the pawns on the chessboard, yet it was anti-aristocratic revolutionary government which made his pecuniary exile in his final years, so arduous

Some of the games from his simultaneous blindfold displays have been preserved and since, for most of his life, Philidor had no equal in the chess-world, he gave odds practically all the time when he played; as a result of this, and the censorship of what might loosely be termed his informal literary executors, very few of his games on level terms have come down to us. This paucity of games on equal terms, played against worthy opponents, underscores the importance of the insight that this week's game may well be one from the Stamma match. Whatever can be said about Stamma, he certainly had an eye for brilliant tactical solutions.

One of the 100 puzzles contained in his book, *Essai sur le jeu des échecs* (1737), follows:-

White to play and mate in 5

The elegant win is 1.♕g8+ ♔xg8 (1…♖xg8 2.♘f7 smothered mate) 2.♘e7+ ♔h8 3.♘f7+ ♖xf7 4.♖c8+ ♖f8 5.♖xf8 delivering a back rank checkmate.

It is also interesting to highlight the role played by the Duke of Cumberland in sponsoring Philidor and his book (he personally, and remarkably, subscribed for 50 copies in 1749 and many other army officers who subscribed probably did so to humour their commander in chief).

Philidor began his career as a professional player at the English army camp in Flanders, even before he went to London - and Cumberland may well have sponsored his Stamma match as well. Possibly in conjunction with Stamma's patron , Lord Harrington. As chess sponsor, this would be a novel way of looking at the 'butcher' of Culloden - chess backer and enthusiast, as well as being the conquering hero who terminated Bonnie Prince Charlie's dreams of Britannic Imperium . For his part, it was doubtless the influence of Lord Harrington which enabled Stamma to be appointed translator of Oriental Languages to the court of King George II. The concomitant salary of £80.00 per annum would have been sufficient for Stamma to enjoy the lifestyle of a gentleman in the London of his day.

My key insight was that the otherwise anonymous games and analysis in Philidor's book, might well be concealing an all important Philidor win against Stamma from their match. The clue would be a Black win against 1. d4. Lo and behold, there was such a game, which I conjecture to be:

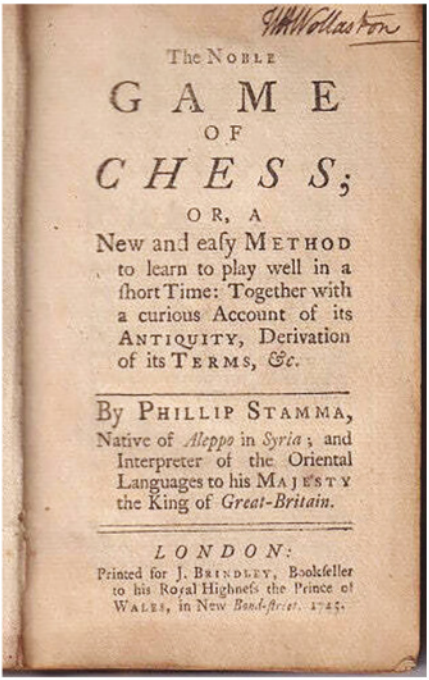
Philip Stamma vs. François-André Danican Philidor

Match, London, 1747

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3

In the modern game, replies are more typically: 3. ♘f3 or 3. e4. Philidor personally preferred 3. e4 and the influence of his

THE NOBLE GAME OF CHESS



The Noble
GAME
OF
CHESS;
OR, A
New and easy Method
to learn to play well in a
short Time: Together with
a curious Account of its
Antiquity, Derivation
of its Terms, &c.

By Phillip Stamma,
Native of *Aleppo* in *Syria*; and
Interpreter of the Oriental
Languages to his Majesty
the King of *Great-Britain*.

London:
Printed for J. Brindley, Bookseller
to his Royal Highness the Prince of
Wales, in New Bond-street. 1745.

Philip Stamma, originally from Aleppo in Ottoman Syria, later settled in England and France, where he became a prominent chess master and writer. He is best known for his 1737 book Essai sur le jeu des échecs (translated into English as The Noble Game of Chess in 1745). His work introduced European players to advanced endgame concepts from the Middle Eastern chess tradition, contributing to a renewed focus on endgame study in Europe.

various analytical forays could still be felt in the games of Macdonnell, Labourdonnais, Staunton and even Morphy in the following century. Philidor himself in his book remarks that a certain author (presumably also a strong player) habitually favoured 3. e3, another powerful clue pointing to Stamma being the otherwise anonymous player of the White pieces in this game. As an archimandrite of the Arabic School, Stamma might also have been predisposed towards single, rather than double, pawn moves on the first turn, since the two step initial advance was unknown in the older Arabic version of chess, from which the international variant sprang.

3…f5? An interesting if, to modern eyes, wholly anti-positional development. Black spuriously deems contesting control of the e4-square more important than the production of the weak, and now backward e-pawn. Both 3...♘f6 and ...e5 are stronger alternatives.

4.♗xc4 e6 5.f3? Another move , redolent of the ancient Arabic tradition of one step pawn moves in the opening. Thereby, White challenges the strategic purpose of Black's third move, entering into contention for the e4-square. But this is inaccurate, and either 5. ♘f3 or ♘c3 keeps a pleasant advantage intact.

5...♘f6 6.♘c3 c5 7.♘ge2 ♘c6 8.O−O g5? An ambitious and dangerously committed lunge, seeking to pressurize the White king before his own has relocated to a safe position. More progressive tries were, 8...a6 or ...♘a5. Nevertheless, the text is quite consistent with Philidor's standard practice of advancing on the enemy with a pawn tsunami. This theme becomes more pronounced as the game progresses.

9.dxc5? Missing promising opportunities to exploit Black's last. For example, 9. a3

permits a square to which the c4-bishop can retreat, as is illustrated by: 9…a6 10.♗a2 ♖g8 11.d5 exd5 12.e4 d4 13.e5 b5 14.exf6 c4 15.a4 dxc3 16.axb5 ♕xd1 17.♖xd1 c2 18.f7+ ♔xf7 19.♗xc4+. Also worthy of consideration, in view of a future e3-e4 advance, is the prophylactic 9.♔h1.

9...♕xd1 10.♖xd1 ♗xc5 11.♘d4 ♔e7 Marginally preferable is, 11... ♔f7, as in many variations, this move needs to be played later.

12.♘a4 ♗d6?! Allowing White the advantage, when after, 12...♗xd4 13.exd4 h6 14.h4 gxh4 15.♔f2 ♖d8 16.♗e3 b6 17.♘c3 ♗b7 18.♘e2 ♘a5 19.♗d3 ♗e4, Black is very close to equalising.

13.♘xc6+ bxc6

Philidor is happy. A wing pawn gravitates towards the centre.

14.f4? Relinquishing a tangible edge. White should continue, 14.e4 h6 (14… f4 15.b3 e5 16.♗b2 ♖d8 17.h4 h6 18.♖ac1 ♘d7 19.♗e2 ♗b7 20.♖c2 ♗b4) 15.exf5 exf5 16.♖e1+ ♔f8 17.♗e3 ♘d5 18.♗f2 ♖h7 19.♖ed1 ♖c7 20.♗xd5 cxd5 21.♖xd5, maintaining a healthy initiative.

14...h6 15.♗d2 White has better alternatives in: 15.b3 ♖g8 16.♖xd6 ♔xd6 17.♗a3+ ♔c7 18.♗b2 ♘d5 19.♖e1 ♔d6 20.♗a3+ ♔c7; and,15.g3 ♖d8 16.♗d2 ♖b8 17.b3 ♗d7 18.♔f1 c5 19.♘b2 ♗c7 20.♗e2 ♘e4 21.♖ac1 ♗c6 22. ♗e1, both of which retain level chances.

15...♘d5 16.g3 ♗d7 17.♔f2 Conceding Black an edge, when 17.♖ac1 ♖ag8 18.♗xd5 cxd5 19.♘c5 ♖b8 20.b4, is equal.

17...c5 Black does better with, 17...h5 18.♖ac1 h4 19.♗f1 ♗e8 20.♗g2 ♗h5 21.♖g1 ♘f6.

18.♘c3 ♗c6 19.♘xd5+ exd5 20.♗e2 ♖ag8 Not Black's best choice. Full equality is maintained after either:

a) 20... gxf4 21.gxf4 ♔e6 22.♖g1 ♖hg8 23.♗c3 ♗e7 24.♖xg8 ♖xg8 25.♖g1 ♗h4+ 26.♔f1 ♖xg1+ 27.♔xg1 ♗f6 28.♗xf6 ♔xf6;

b) 20...♔e6 21.♗c3 gxf4 22.gxf4 ♖hg8 23.♖g1 ♗e7 24.♖xg8 ♖xg8 25.♖g1 ♖xg1 26.♔xg1 ♗f6 27.♗xf6 ♔xf6 28.♔f1.

21.♗c3

Now Philidor unleashes a further refinement of his strategic vision, standardly predicated on a tsunamic pawn advance. In this case it involves sacrificing rook for bishop.

21… gxf4 22.♗xh8 White does marginally better after: 22.gxf4 d4 23.exd4 ♖g2+ 24.♔e3 cxd4+ 25.♗xd4 ♖e8 26.♗h5 ♖c8 27.♖g1 ♖cg8 28.♖xg2 ♖xg2 29.♗f3 ♗xf3 30.♔xf3.

22...fxe3+ 23.♔xe3 ♖xh8 24.♗f3 ♔e6 25.♖d2?! Black gains an initiative after this inaccuracy. White should have preferred, 25.♔f2 ♖b8 26.b3 ♗e5 27.♖ac1 ♔d6 28.♖c4 ♗d4+ 29.♖cxd4 cxd4 30.♖xd4 ♖c8 with an almost level position.

25... d4+ 26.♔f2 ♗e4 27.♖e1 ♔d5 28.♖de2 ♖e8 29.g4

29…♗xf3? A second exchange sacrifice is an inspired decision, but objectively it represents a serious error by Black. A level position is retained after the less ambitious: 29...♖f8 30.♖xe4 fxe4 31.♖xe4 ♔c4 32.h4 ♔d3 33.g5 hxg5 34.hxg5 ♖f5 35.g6 ♗f8 36.♖g4 ♗g7.

30.♖xe8 fxg4 31.h3? That White is still in quite good shape after this inaccuracy is a testament to the scope of Black's twenty-ninth move error. White should have continued: 31.♖d8 c4 32.♖e7 ♔c5 33.♖xa7 c3 34.bxc3 dxc3 35.♖a3 ♗xh2 36.♖xc3+ ♔b6 37.♖h8, when he is close to winning.

31...c4? Black's error regifts White his prior advantage. Better was 31...d3 32.♖1e3 c4 33.♖xf3 gxf3 34.♔xf3 ♔c5 35.b3 cxb3 36.axb3 ♔b4 37.♖d8 ♗e5, when Black limits White's edge.

32. ♖g8??

This blunder turns the game on its head. White's pronounced momentum was telling, if not winning, after: 32. hxg4 ♗xg4 33. ♖d8 d3 34. ♖ee8 ♔c6 35. ♖e4 ♗c5+ 36. ♔g3 ♔c7 37. ♔xg4 ♔xd8 38. ♔f3 c3 39. bxc3. In fact White is spoilt for choice as, 32. ♖d8 d3 33. ♖ee8 ♔c5 34. hxg4 ♗xg4 35. ♖e4 d2 36. ♖xd6 ♔xd6 37. ♖d4+ ♔c5 38. ♖xd2 accomplishes the same outcome.

32... d3 33. ♔e3?!

In case things weren't bad enough, White errs further. Correct was 33. ♖b1 or hxg4.

33... ♗c5+ 34. ♔f4 d2 and wins 0-1

Pancho, our silicon brain, gives: 35. ♖b1 (35. ♖a1 d1=♕ 36. ♖xd1+ ♗xd1 37. hxg4 ♗d6+ 38. ♔e3 ♗e7 transposes) 35... ♗d6+ 36. ♔e3 d1=♘+ 37. ♖xd1+ ♗xd1 38. hxg4 ♗e7 39. ♖g7 ♗g5+ 40. ♔f2 ♔e4 41. ♔e1 ♗xg4 42. ♖xa7 h5, with a decisive advantage to Black.

This game is seminal. By modern computer standards, it is subject to substantial criticism, but as an example of early chess science, expounding the influence of the impact of massed pawn infantry (the soul of chess according to Philidor's theories) and as a display of strategic sacrifices of the exchange (rook for bishop) it is truly remarkable!

I would like to conclude by expressing my thanks to leading chess historian Richard Eales: for providing essential information, plus checking, as well as endorsing, my view that the preceding game may well, at best, represent one of the "lost" Stamma v. Philidor encounters, or at worst, be heavily indicative of the general thrust of their otherwise vanished clashes.

AMERICAN
CHESS MAGAZINE
ACMchess.com

WINTON

David Hodge clinches third consecutive British Chess Solving Championship

David Hodge has secured his third straight British Chess Solving Championship title, adding the 2025 crown to his victories in 2023 and 2024. The competition, held on 15 February at the prestigious Harrow School, was once again sponsored by Winton, the quantitative investment management firm.

Hodge dominated the field, finishing ahead of a strong contingent that included Professor Jonathan Mestel, the most decorated solver in British history, who took second place. Both Hodge and Mestel were part of the British team that won the World Chess Solving Championship in July.

A notable third-place finish went to Luke McShane, one of Britain's leading over-the-board (OTB) Grandmasters. McShane, competing in a major solving tournament for the first time, produced an impressive performance. Fourth place was taken by Audrey Kueh, another relative newcomer to the discipline, while Colin McNab, a two-time former champion and solving stalwart, finished fifth.

The Open competition, held alongside the British Championship, saw Belgium's Eddy van Beers defend his title from 2024. A world-class solver and ratings favourite, van Beers' victory came as little surprise.

Among the competitors at Harrow was Oliver Penrose, brother of the late Jonathan Penrose, one of Britain's finest-ever OTB players. At 95, Oliver was the oldest participant, showcasing the truly ageless appeal of chess solving. The age span among competitors at the event stretched over seven decades.

Chess solving tournaments test participants' ability to crack composed chess problems within a set time. Challenges typically involve finding forced checkmate sequences in a given number of moves, with points awarded based on solution accuracy.

All problems from this year's event are available online and can be published via:
https://solving.wfcc.ch/wsc/2024-2025/info.html

Additionally, a Minor tournament ran concurrently, featuring slightly less demanding problems. These can be found at:
https://solving.wfcc.ch/tourneys/2025/other-rst-2025.html

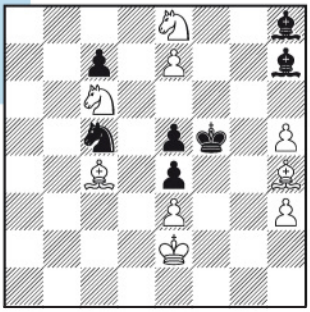
For further details, contact Ian Watson at ian@irwatson.uk.

PROBLEM WORLD

by Christopher Jones
cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk
Grandmaster of Chess Composition

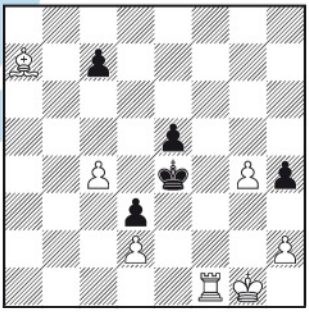
Solutions are given on page 190

1



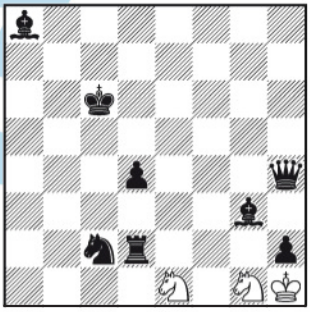
Leonid Lyubashevsky and Leonid Makaronez (Israel)
Mate in 3
ORIGINAL

2



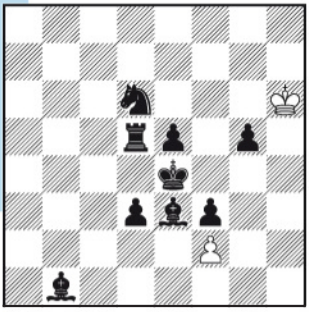
Paul Michelet (London)
Mate in 5
ORIGINAL

3



Ljubomir Ugren (Slovenia)
Helpmate in 5 - 2 solutions
ORIGINAL

4



Yuri Bilokin (Ukraine)
Helpmate in 5.5 - 2 solutions
ORIGINAL, *after John Nunn*

QUOTES AND QUERIES

REMEMBERING MAX LANGE

By Alan Smith

Max Lange (1832-1899) was a strong German player active in the third quarter of the 19th century who gave his name to two openings, both known as the Max Lange Attack. The first:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d4 exd4 5.0-0 ♗c5 6.e5 will be familiar to modern players. The second is a related line 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d4!? which can transpose into the first line, but black also has the option of 5...♗xd4 which leads to the other Max Lange Attack after 6.♘xd4 ♘xd4 7.f4.

Max **Lange - Heinemann**

Halle, 1853

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.0–0 ♗c5 5.d4 ♗xd4 6.♘xd4 ♘xd4 7.f4 ♘e6? This is not good. 7...d6 is correct.

8.fxe5 ♘g8 I presume black originally intended 8...♘xe4 but then decided he did not like the look of 9.♕f3 ♘4g5 10.♗xg5 ♘xg5 11.♗xf7+, blacks problems are nicely illustrated by the game F.J.Wallis - T.H.Fitzpatrick Sydney 1899, which concluded 11...♔f8 12.♕h5! g6 13.♕h6+ 1-0.

9.♖xf7!? This works out fine, but 9.♗xe6! was also strong 9...dxe6 10.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11.♖xf7 while 9...fxe6 10.♕f3 ♕e7 is refuted by 11.♗g5 ♕c5+ 12.♔h1 ♘h6 13.♗xh6 gxh6 14.♕f7+ ♔d8 15.♕f6+

9...♔xf7 10.♗xe6+ ♔xe6 Black could have tried 10...♔e8 when white has a pawn for the exchange, but his king is not ideally placed.

Max Lange

11.♕d5+ ♔e7 12.♗g5+ ♘f6 13.♘c3 ♖f8 14.♖f1 d6 15.exf6+ gxf6 16.♖xf6 ♖xf6 Black cannot refuse the second rook offer 16...♔d7? 17.♖f7+ **17.e5 ♗e6** 17...dxe5?? 18.♗xf6+.

18.♗xf6+ ♔f7 18...♔d7 19.♕b5+ c6 20.♕xb7+ ♕c7 21.♕xa8 is no better, 21...♕b6+ 22.♔h1 and the need to prevent ♕d8 stymies black's counter play.

19.♕f3 ♕g8 This looks good, but takes away an important retreat square for his king. 19...♕d7! is stronger.

20.♘e4 dxe5?? This is the real culprit for black's loss 20...♕g4! is a tougher nut to crack. 21.♘g5+ ♔g6 22.♘xe6 ♕xf3 23.gxf3 leads to a tricky endgame, but that is better than the game continuation.

21.♗d8+! ♔g6 21...♔e8 22.♘f6+ ♔xd8 23.♘xg8 ♗xg8 24.♕f8+.

22.♕f6+ 22...♔h5 23.♕h4+ ♔g6 24.♕g5+ ♔f7 25.♕f6+ ♔e8 26.♕e7 #

1–0

Illustrirte Zeitung, 20th August 1853

Max Lange also defeated Anderssen, who found the correct defence, but blundered later on. Years later he came up with an improvement on that game.

Max **Lange** - Johannes **Minckwitz**

Leipzig, 1866

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0–0 ♘f6 5.d4 ♗xd4 6.♘xd4 ♘xd4 7.f4 d6 8.fxe5 dxe5 9.♗g5 ♗e6 10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.♗xe6 ♘xe6 11...fxe6 is plausible.

12.♘c3 c6 12...♕xd1? 13.♖axd1 ♔e7 14.♘d5+**.**

13.♕f3 Varying from, and improving on, Max Lange - Anderssen Breslau 1859 which continued 13.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 14.♖xf6 ♔e7 15.♖af1**.**

13...♘f4 14.g3 ♖g8 15.♔h1 ♘g6 16.♖ad1 ♕e7 17.♕e3 Black is struggling to untangle his position.

17...h5 This is tempting but ...b6 now, or on his next move was better.

18.♘e2 h4 19.♖d2 b6 20.♖fd1 ♕e6 21.♕f3 hxg3 22.♘xg3 ♘h4 23.♕f2 f5? 23...♔e7! 24.♘h5 ♖g6! 25.♕xh4 ♖h8 or 24.♖d6 ♕xd6 25.♖xd6 ♔xd6 26.♕xf6+ ♔c7 should be playable for black.

24.♖d6 ♕c4 25.b3 ♕c3 26.♖6d3 ♕b4 27.c3 ♕e7 28.exf5 f6 29.♘e4 ♖g4 30.♖d7 ♖xe4 30...♕f8 **31.♕e2 ♖g7 32.♕h5+ 31.♖xe7+ ...**31...♔xe7 32.♕g3 ♘xf5 33.♕d3 ♖f4 34.♕d7+ ♔f8 35.♕xc6

1–0

Schachzeitung, April 1867, p112

Max Lange won several small events in the 1860's leading up to his greatest success. He tied for first place with Anderssen at Aachen 1868, ahead of Zukertort and won the playoff game to secure the first prize. He also won a majority of games played against Anderssen at Breslau in 1859.

The following game shows Max Lange going his own way in the Sicilian. 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 had been successfully adopted by both Cochrane and Elijah Williams in the 1840's. Max Lange added a refinement of his own.

Max **Lange** - Max **Bezzel**

Leipzig, 1856

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.♗b5 ♘ge7 5.0–0 ♕c7 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘g6 8.♘de2 ♗c5 Played to prevent f2-f4-f5.

9.a3 0–0 10.b4 ♗e7 11.f4 ♗f6 12.♕d2 d6 13.♗b2 ♖d8 14.♖ad1 b6? 14...a6 was better.

15.♗xc6 ♕xc6 16.♘d4 ♗xd4 Frightened by the prospect of ♘db5, this sets up problems on the long diagonal.

17.♕xd4 e5? 18.fxe5 ♗g4 19.exd6! ♗xd1 20.♘d5 f6 21.♘xf6+! Illustrirte Zeitung 11th October 1856 stopped here.

21...gxf6 22.♖xf6 ♖d7 23.♖xg6+! hxg6 24.♕h8+ ♔f7 25.♕g7+ ♔e6 26.♕xg6 #

1–0

Aus vergangen zeiten,
volume 2 - Ludwig Bachmann

Max **Lange - Dr Eliason**

Berlin, 1858

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.♗b5 ♕c7 4...♘d4 is better, setting a sneaky trap, 5.♘xd4? cxd4 6.♘e2 ♕g5! Mason - Maroczy Monte Carlo 1903.

5.0–0 a6 6.♗xc6 ♘xc6 7.d4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♕c7 9.f4 ♘f6? Black ought to have tried 9...♗c5 10.♗e3 ♘e7

10.e5 ♘d5? 10...♘g8 is slow, but black has more time with the centre locked.

11.♘xd5 exd5 12.♔h1 d6 13.♖e1 ♗e7 14.exd6 ♕xd6 15.♕e2 ♔f8 16.f5 ♕d8 17.♗f4 ♗d7 18.♕f3 ♗c6 19.♖e6! ♗c5 20.♘xc6 bxc6 21.f6?! This works out well, but 21.♖xc6! is more to the point. **21...♗d4** He needed to grab the rook 21... fxe6 22.fxg7+ ♔xg7 23.♗e5+ and white has no more than a draw by repetition.

22.fxg7+ ♗xg7 23.♗d6+ ♔g8 24.♖f1 f6 25.♕g3 h5 26.♖exf6 h4 27.♕g5 ♖h7 28.♖f8+! ♕xf8 29.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 30.♗xf8 ♔xf8 31.♕f5+ ♔g8 32.♕e6+ ♔f8 33.♕xc6 ...

1–0

Schachzeitung 1858, p416-417

A pathfinder in the opening he was also the first to play the Relfsson gambit 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♗b5 and the Pierce Gambit, albeit by a different move order. Columnist, editor , author, organiser and problemist he enriched chess with his new ideas.

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Endgame Studies

by Ian Watson
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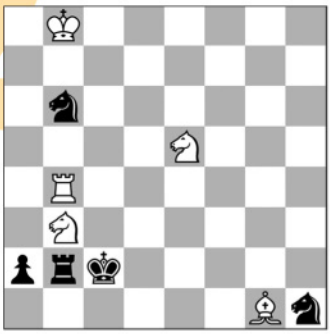
1

G. Costeff
EG, 2024
BLACK TO PLAY, WHITE WINS

2



A. Manvelyan
Kasparyan MT 1996
WIN

3

R. Becker
Magyar Sakkvilag 2004
WIN

4

J. Timman
The Art of the Endgame 2011
DRAW

A CENTURY OF STUDIES

FIDE celebrated its centenary in 2024. To mark this, a book about studies was published, containing studies from all of the years 1924 to 2024. The author is Gady Costeff, one of the leading study composers of recent years. Costeff has chosen one study per year, out of roughly one thousand published each year, and each is a pleasure to solve or you can just admire their artistry. Three of the studies this month are from the book.

First, however, another 2024 achievement by Costeff. It is the first full Babson Task in a study. You probably know what that means, but anyway: Black defences include promotion of a pawn to each of queen, rook, bishop, and knight. In each case, White responds by promoting a pawn of his own to the same piece that Black did. This challenging task, proposed by Joseph Babson in 1884, was done in selfmates in 1926. In orthodox direct mates, it proved very much harder, and was only achieved in 1983, by Leonid Yarosh. To achieve it in studies is yet more difficult. Now Costeff has succeeded - sort of. I say "sort of" because his study has an illegal position, which strictly means that it is not allowed by the Codex of chess compositions. It is also Black to move, and it has three White knights on the board. Nonetheless, it is an extraordinary composition, a masterpiece of difficulty and ingenuity. Its existence suggests that a legal Babson study might be possible; you may even want to try your skills at composing one. I should warn you, however, that seeking one might become an obsession - the task is arguably the most challenging in all study composition.

The solution to Costeff's Babson study is:

1...d1♕ 2.fxe8♕ ♕xd4+ 3.♘c4 ♘c5+ 4.♘xc5 ♖b4+ 5.axb4

1...d1♖ 2.fxe8♖ ♖xd4+ 3.♘c4

1...d1♗ 2.fxe8♗

1...d1♘ 2.fxe8♘+

There are numerous complex lines, which I will not give here, but the study's soundness has withstood testing by the latest hardware and software. You can find details on the ARVES website (arves.org) and in the October 2024 issue of their magazine EG.

The Manvelyan study was Costeff's pick for the year 1996. It won first prize in the Kasparyan Memorial Tourney. Kasparyan is considered one of the greatest, and possibly the greatest, study composer of all time; he had died the year before the tourney was held. The play in this study is splendid, and to quote Costeff "The final position with three model mates is spectacular."

Richard Becker is a familiar name to study enthusiasts. This study of his won first prize in the Magyar Sakkvilag tourney of 2004. It is Costeff's pick for that year. After eleven moves it arrives at the position of a classic study by Julius Gunst; as Costeff writes, it has "a marvelous *prequel*, with beautiful systematic movement by four pieces".

Adding a front end to a classic study is carried even further by Timman's study, Costeff's selection for the year 2011. After Timman's intro, it becomes a Matous study from 1979, then that becomes a Kryuchkov from 1938, then a Herbstman of 1934, and finally an Amelung of 1896. An extraordinary display of how study composers build on and enhance the work of their predecessors.

Costeff's book, "One Endgame Study in a Thousand", is published by Peter Gvozdjak, and is available from fidealbum.com for eight euros. I wondered if they had omitted a digit from the price!

The solutions are on page 191.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

This month's originals

Although I've put the two 'direct mate' problems in ascending order of length and have done the same with the two helpmates, in each case you'll find the longer problem easier to solve. (Or, probably more accurately, 'much less difficult'!) Whether you solve them or simply read through the solutions I think you'll enjoy them. Remember that in helpmates Black and White are collaborating to get Black mated, and generally Black plays first; but in Yuri's problem (in which he acknowledges a debt to a problem by John Nunn published in the journal of the British Chess Problem Society, *The Problemist*) it is White that initiates each of the two sequences - wbwbwbwbwbw - which end with Black mated.

Another three-mover conundrum

Our first problem is a typical complex problem by our regular contributors, the two Leonids. The key may be more conspicuous than usual: 1.♘xc7! threatens 2.e8=♘, when Black would be undone by the two threats, 3.♘d6# and 3.♘e7#. One defensive try is 1…♗g6, with the idea of 2…♗xh5+, but now it is a different promotion that works: 2.e8=♕ (threats 3.♕xg6# and 3.♘e7#, the latter still working after 2…♗xe8). If 2…♗xh5+, 3.♕xh5#.

Another defensive try, 1…♗f6, also fails against 2.e8=Q, which this time creates zugzwang. Various black moves are met by 3.♕g6# or 3.♘e7#, and there is a new mate after 2…♗xh4: 3.♕xe5#. But probably the nicest move in the whole solution arises after 1…♗g7. Here, White has to find 2.♘e8!!, a 'switchback' move that blocks his promotion square (shades of the famous Reti study?). The point is that now White has a double threat - as well as 3.Nd6# there is also 3.Nxg7#; and inspection reveals that every attempted black resource fails against one or other of these mating moves. (Delightfully, 1…♗g7 2.e8=♘ fails because, with no white pawn at e7, 2…♗f8! guards against both the threatened mates!) Finally, the composers mop up the defence 1…♗g8 - after the reply 2.♗xg8, Black is helpless against 3.♗h7#.

Setting up a battery

In Paul's problem, we need to set up a battery, but the obvious way to do this fails - 1.♔h1 c5! 2.♗xc5 h3 3.♗g1 and now the idea runs 3…~ 4.♖f2 ♔d4 5.♖f4#, but sadly there is no "…~" move and the position after 3.♗g1 is stalemate! So White neatly sidesteps this difficulty by playing 1.♗c5!, after which Black has two moves that can be played in either order, e.g., 1…c6 2.♔h1 h3, and now the intention works like clockwork: 3.♗g1 c5 4.♖f2 ♔d4 5.♖f4#.

Two excellent helpmate solutions

Our third problem illustrates why so many helpmate fans do so greatly enjoy Ljubomir's problems. It is no mean feat, and usually the fruit of many hours of labour, to produce two equally compelling lines of play, with no shared moves, and very widely separated denouements, which nevertheless have a sense of belonging together. In this case the solver's eye is drawn to the long diagonal, and to the probability that in the early part of the solution one of the white knights will be drawn on to that diagonal at f3, before being released so that in tandem with its equine colleague it can weave a mating net. Here's how the solutions work: 1.♔d5 ♘gf3 2.♔e4 ♘xh2 3.♔e3+ ♔g1 4.♕e4 ♔f1 5.♗f4 ♘g4# and 1.♔b5+ ♘ef3 2.♗d5 ♘e2 3.♗b3 ♘fxd4+ 4.♔a4 ♘c6

(See page 184)

5.♘a3 ♘c3#. Along with all the other attractive elements I'm very impressed by how the black knight blocks a flight square, c2, in one solution and another, a3, in the other.

The one white pawn wins the day

Helpmate composers are drawn to the notion that a white pawn, unsupported except possibly by the white king, can in one solution make it all the way to promotion ("Excelsior") to inflict mate, while in the other it waits until the final move to achieve that result. Yuri's is a nice example of this appealing motif: 1…♔h5 2.♖d4 ♔g4 3.♔d5+ ♔xf3 4.♗a2 ♔g3 5.♔e4 ♔g4 6.♗d5 f3# and 1…fxe3 2.♔f5 e4+ 3.♔f6 exd5 4.♘e8 d6 5.♔f7 d7 6.♔g8 dxe8=♕#.

SOLUTIONS TO ENDGAMES

(See page 188)

Manvelyan

1.♘a1+ ♔b1 2.♖e4 ♘a4+ 3.♔a8 ♔xa1 4.♖e1+ ♖b1 5.♗d4+ ♘b2 6.♖e2 ♘g3 7.♖c2 ♘f5 8.♘d3 ♘xd4 9.♘c1 and **9...♘xc2 10.♘b3** mate, **9...♖xc1 10.♖xc1** mate, **9...♘b2~ 10.♖xa2** mate.

Becker

1.b7 ♖f1+ 2.♔g2 ♖b1 3.♘c3 ♖b2+ 4.♔f3 ♔g7 5.♘a4 ♖b3+ 6.♔e4 ♔f7 7.♘c5 ♖b4+ 8.♔d5 ♔e7 9.♘a6 ♖b1 10.b8♕ ♖xb8 11.♘xb8 ♔d8 12.♗b7 ♔c7 13.♗a6 ♔xb8 14.♔d6 ♔a8 15.♔c7 d5 16.♗b7 mate.

The position after 11...♔d8 is the study by Gunst from 1922.

7.♔d5? ♔e8 8.♘c5 Rb6 9.♘xd7 ♖xb7. (9...♖b5+ 10.♔c4.)

Timman

1.♗c6 ♗d1 2.♗d7+ ♔xd7 3.♖xh2 a5 4.♖a2 a4 5.♖a1 ♖xa1 6.♔b2 and draws.

In the main line: 2.♖xh2? ♖c1+; 3...♔c6 4.Rh1 with 5.♔d2; 4.♖h1? a4 5.♔d2 a3.

The Matous arises after 3.♖xh2; the Kryuchkov after 3...a5; Herbstman after 4... a4, and Amelung after 5...♖xa1.

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